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The struggle in Ferrara

William Gilbert

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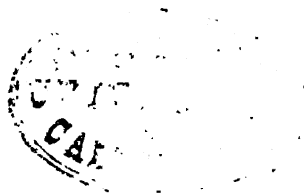
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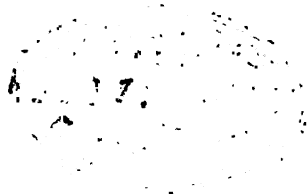
"THE MAN HERE RAISED HIS HEAD

THE
STRUGGLE IN FERRARA.

A STORY OF THE
REFORMATION IN ITALY.

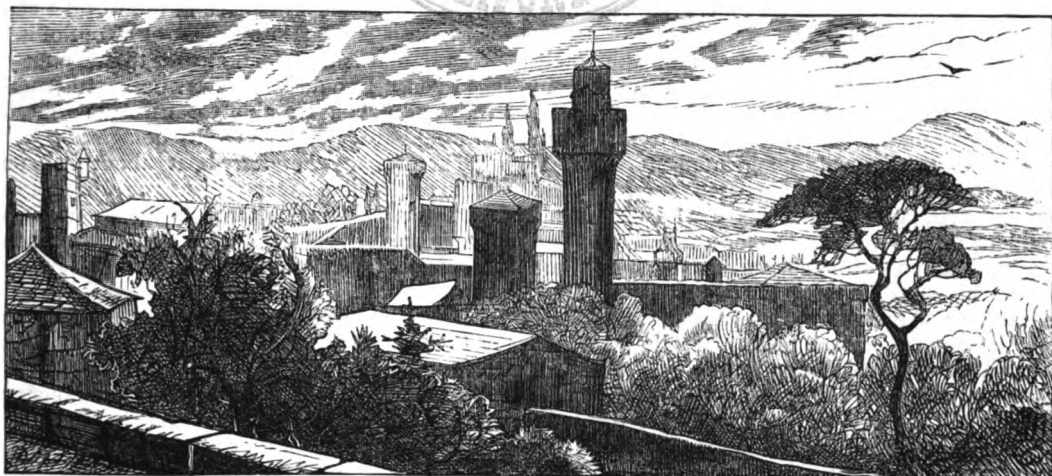
By WILLIAM GILBERT,
AUTHOR OF "DE PROFUNDIS," ETC.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS,
By F. A. FRASER.



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THE STRUGGLE IN FERRARA.

CHAPTER I.—THE MONK.



ON a calm evening in the month of May, 1534, a man in the dress of a Capuchin Friar, having a half-filled wallet slung over his shoulder and a stout staff in his hand, wended his way towards Ferrara. Although he was still several miles from the city, he was evidently exhausted, and

shoulders. To have formed a tolerably correct opinion of his age would have been as difficult as to have judged of his features. True, he stooped considerably in his walk, and his pace was slow and deliberate, but these might rather have been occasioned by exhaustion and fatigue than by the weight of years; and this supposition was still farther increased by the accumulation of dust on his sandalled feet and on the edge of his frock.

As he journeyed onwards a singular peculiarity was observable in the Friar. As a rule, his order were habitually most communicative, entering willingly into conversation with all who addressed them; and as they were generally looked upon as the newsmongers of the country districts, few passed them without exchanging at least some sentences. With our Friar, on the contrary, this was far from being the case; and he appeared to avoid, as much as possible, the peasants he met, taking care to pass them on the opposite side of the road, and returning with courteous, though few words, the remarks they made when they had reached him.

Night began to set in, and stars, one by one, to shine forth in the heavens, while myriads of fire-flies illuminated the fields by the side of the road, flashing their lovely light with such brilliancy as almost to dazzle the eye. The calm beauty of the Italian sunset, however, appeared to have no charms for the wayfarer, and he continued on his road till he had nearly reached Mal-Albergo, situated on the banks of the river, nearly opposite to the principal gates of Ferrara, when the sound of the church bells calling the congregations together for the benediction, warned him that he had nearly arrived at his journey's end. But instead of hurrying on to secure a place in the last ferry-boat, he suddenly stopped short, and seating himself on a bank by the road-side, appeared to meditate deeply, as if undetermined what course

appeared to continue his journey with much difficulty. He would frequently stop to rest for a few moments, and then apparently summoning up fresh courage, continue his way for some distance, and then rest again. Beyond the fact that he was somewhat above the middle height, it would have been difficult to judge of his appearance, for although the weather was sultry and oppressive, he wore his cowl so far forward on his head as almost entirely to conceal his features. This was evidently done purposely, for the sun was already so near the horizon that he had nothing to fear from its rays; and had he studied his personal comfort, he would naturally have thrown his cowl back on his

to pursue, evidently wishing to reach the termination of his journey, yet for some strong cause hesitating to enter the city.

He remained for some time seated, alternately glancing at the lights which began to appear in the city as night advanced, and then on the road and country around him, as if anxious to meet with some person to whom he could apply for information. No one, however, appeared; and he rose from his seat, and turning his cowl back on his shoulders, proceeded onwards for a few paces, when he again suddenly stopped, and retraced for some distance his steps, looking eagerly on each side of the road, as if trying to distinguish whether there might be any habitation near. At last he saw a light in a meadow at a little distance from the road. He was on the point of proceeding to it, when he suddenly halted, as if to determine what the light might be, for it appeared to be too close on the ground and too bright to be in any dwelling. The idea then struck him that it might merely be a will-o'-the-wisp hanging over the marshes, as was common at that season in the districts around Ferrara; but a moment's thought told him that this could not be so, as the colour was too red.

He now hesitated no longer. Leaping from the bank, he approached the light, though with some difficulty, his steps being impeded by the brushwood, and his feet clogged by the swampy nature of the soil. Still he pushed onward, and at last came close to the light, which he found to proceed from four torches tied together, their shafts stuck into the ground. At first he was greatly puzzled how to act, as he saw no one near, nor could he divine for what purpose the torches had been placed there; but at length he perceived a man some ten or twelve yards from the light, seated on a stone, his elbows on his knees, and his face buried in his hands.

The Friar again drew his cowl over his head, and, without hesitation, walked up to the man, and said softly to him,

"My son, are you asleep?"

"I am not; but had I been, I should hardly have thanked you for waking me," was the uncourteous reply of the man, who still remained in the same position, with his face buried in his hands.

"I am sorry to disturb you," said the Friar, "but you would greatly oblige me by telling me if there is a ferryman anywhere near who could row me over to the city."

"The only one near here," replied the man, without raising his head, "is the one at Mal-Albergo; but I suspect you will be too late for him, as he must have left off work half an hour since."

"But I did not wish to enter the city by the Strada del Po, and I had a dim recollection that there was another ferry farther up the river."

"You are a stranger, then?" said the man, still maintaining the same position.

"Not altogether," said the Capuchin. "I have visited Ferrara more than once already; but the last occasion was several years ago."

"It must be a strong temptation that induces

you to return to it again," said the man sardonically. "It is the last place in the world I should wish to visit, if I could once get clear out of it."

"Still, that is hardly an answer to my inquiry. I asked you if I could find a ferry-boat farther up the river; and if you are able to answer the question, you would greatly oblige me by doing so."

"There is another ferry-boat about half-a-mile farther on," said the man; "but you will find some difficulty in reaching it through the swamps; and then, again, you will not get Giacomo, the ferryman, to leave his bed at this time of night without being well paid for it. I know him too well for that."

"That is unfortunate for one of my order," said the Friar; "for we rarely carry money with us, and I have none."

The man here raised his head for a moment and gazed at the Friar with much curiosity and evident interest. Then rising from his seat, and taking off his cap, he said, in a tone of respect which strongly contrasted with the abrupt manner in which he had hitherto replied to the Friar's inquiries—

"Ah! pardon me, Reverend Father, I did not know who I was speaking to, or I should not have been so uncivil. What can I do to serve you?"

"Thanks, my son," said the Friar; "all I wish is to enter the city by the Porto San Giorgio. Can you assist me in doing so, by telling me in what manner I can cross the river, for I tell you candidly I have no money to pay the ferryman?"

"And I am sure Giacomo, who is little better than a pig of a heretic and an imp of Calvin himself, would rather go without his money than row you over, monk as you are, even if you could pay him. But he will soon have his reward; the times are now fast changing; the heretics have had their day, and now ours is coming."

The Friar, from under his cowl, examined his companion minutely, lit up as he was by the burning torches. He was an old man, about seventy years of age, with low forehead, deep sunk, sparkling black eyes, indicative of great cunning, and sickly, swarthy, sallow complexion. His dress, which was that of the poorer class, was covered with mud, with which his feet and hands were also begrimed. Altogether, he was of most repulsive appearance. His demeanour to the Friar was now, however, most respectful, and even courteous.

"You seem to take the behaviour of your friend Giacomo much to heart," said the Friar; "but can you tell me of any other way by which I could cross the river?"

"Wait one moment, Reverend Father," said the man; and then advancing towards the torches, and examining a sort of leather trap, something like a long wide-mouthed bag, which had been placed on the ground before the light, but in which he found nothing, he said, with an expression of anger on his countenance—

"It's all useless, all in vain; nothing seems to prosper. I believe the anger of Heaven is directed against the city and all the country around it. It's no use my remaining longer here; and it's better

for me to be in my bed, than run the risk of catching the plague in these marshes."

Then, taking up the leather-bag, and throwing it over his shoulder, he snatched up the torches, and throwing them on the ground, extinguished the flame, leaving himself and the Friar with no more light than was afforded by the fire-flies sparkling around them.

"Reverend Father," he then continued, "I will row you across the river myself, for I have a boat fastened to the shore, a few hundred yards from here; and then, as you are almost a stranger, I will accompany you to the gate of San Giorgio, and put you in your way to the Capuchin convent, where, I suppose, you will lodge for the night. It will be better for me to accompany you than Giacomo, even if you could get him to leave his bed."

"Why so?"

"Because, as I told you before, Giacomo is a heretic, and every one he ferries over is examined at the gates, and a hundred questions asked, such as, with whom they are acquainted in the city? what their business is there? how long they intend stopping? and many other inquiries of the same sort. Now, with me it is different. I am known as a good Catholic, who would no more bring a heretic into the city than the plague itself."

The Friar made no reply to the man's observation, but thanked him warmly for his offer of assistance, and the two started off towards the river.

"You observed, my son," said the Friar, "that you might as well be in bed as run the risk of catching the plague in these marshes? Do I understand you to mean that the plague is again in Ferrara?"

"Well, I cannot state for a certainty that it is," said the man; "but several cases very like it have already been sent to the Lazaretto. But that it will come, there can be little doubt; and terrible indeed will it be when it does come."

"What makes you think so, my son?"

"Because Heaven, in its anger at the favour shown to heretics, has already withdrawn from us all means of curing the plague; and when it comes we shall have to submit to it without help."

"Don't you take too gloomy a view of the case?" said the Friar.

"Certainly not," replied the man. "Who knows better than I do? Have I not been there where you found me night after night, burning my torches, which cost me three soldi a-piece, without any return, leaving me a loss both of time and money?"

"But I don't understand in what way that proves that it would be useless to adopt any remedies against the plague. What were you seeking for?"

"Seeking for!" replied the man somewhat angrily. "Why, for the only secure remedy but one against the plague—vipers, to be sure! Here I have been night after night trying to catch them, and, as I said before, burning my torches to no purpose, and have not caught three in a week. In the days of the last Duke, I have frequently known ten to be caught in a night, and once my son-in-law caught as many as nineteen. Then, again, no

more scorpions are to be found in Bologna, and without scorpions and vipers how will it be possible to cure the plague-stricken? I speak from experience. When the plague was in Ferrara, about the time of the marriage of the Duchess Renée—evil befall her!—we had abundance of vipers, and many were cured of the plague; but now we shall be utterly at its mercy, and bound hand and foot when it comes."

"But why do you say, 'Evil befall the Duchess Renée,' my son?" asked the Friar. "What has she done to offend you?"

"Offend me!" replied the man. "Has she not offended the whole country, and Heaven itself, by introducing into Ferrara the swarm of heretics who came in her train? And has Ferrara ever flourished since? No! I know it better than any one, for everything has gone wrong with me since I first saw her face. I had then a good appointment, which I had held for years, giving perfect satisfaction to every one, but before she had been here three years I lost it."

"But was the loss of your appointment caused by any fault of the Duchess Renée?"

"Certainly it was. For twenty years I had turned the hands of the clock in the Rigobello tower, but some heretic French or Swiss, who came with her, proposed that the hands of the clock should be moved by wheels, weights, and ropes, and the old Duke Alfonso, her father-in-law, who was always too fond of new ideas, agreed to it. Two years afterwards all was completed, and after twenty years' service I was discharged."

"But, after all, it appears to me that, if you have any complaint, it should be against the old Duke Alfonso and not the Duchess Renée, as she seems to have had nothing to do with the alteration."

"Nothing to do with it!" said the old man testily. "If she had not come here at all, the man who proposed the alteration would not have been in her train, and a good Catholic—sinner as I am—would not have been thrown out of bread by a foreign heretic."

"But surely you do not mean to say that, after so many years' service, you were dismissed without compensation? That seems hardly to correspond with the character I have heard of Duke Alfonso, who appears to have behaved liberally and honourably to all."

"I don't wish to say anything against the old Duke, who was in every respect an excellent Prince, and very kind to every one, as long as they didn't offend him; but if they did, they might as well have asked mercy of a hungry lion as of him. However, it's true, when they sent me away, they gave me ten scudi and an appointment in the Lazaretto, which I told you of before; but although the payment was equally good, I didn't like the occupation. There was nothing regular about it. It's a very difficult thing for a man who has been accustomed for twenty years to do nothing else than turn the hands of a clock to get out of the regular habits and notions he has acquired."

"Still, I do not see how that could have interfered with your duties in the Lazaretto. Did they not keep regular hours there?"

"Nothing could be more irregular. The sick would come in at all hours, and sometimes two or three together; then perhaps we should have none for a day, and afterwards a rush of half-a-dozen at a time. Then some took their medicine at one hour and some at another; till at last I told Dr. Castagna that I must leave the establishment, or I should certainly go out of my mind. He replied that he had great pleasure in granting my request, and that I might go as soon as I pleased."

"And what did you do afterwards?"

"Well, I applied for the situation of bell-ringer at the cathedral, and obtained it, but I soon gave it up."

"Why was that?" said the Friar. "I should have thought the regularity of the hours of service would have been agreeable to you."

"So I expected, but it was far from being the case."

"Why so?"

"Well, the hours of service were all regular enough, and for a day or two all went on swimmingly, but then I began to have conscientious scruples whether I could continue it with safety to my soul, so I gave up the appointment."

"But what possible scruples of conscience could you have had in such an appointment? I should have thought it impossible to have found a situation more suited to your taste and capacity."

"It would have suited me perfectly well had it not been for one circumstance. The Archbishop had ordered that the services were to be regulated by the new-fashioned clock in the Rigobello tower. Now, as the machinery moving the clock had been made by a foreign heretic, it went against my conscience that the services in the cathedral should be regulated by it."

"I think, my son, you were a little too scrupulous on the occasion," replied the Friar; "but, at the same time, are you quite sure that personal feeling had not something to do with the matter? I mean, your labours being regulated in some degree by the clock of which you no longer had the control."

"Possibly that might have had something to do with it, Reverend Father."

"And what occupation did you afterwards take up?"

"I went back to the Lazaretto, and again induced them to give me some employment; but I got tired of the irregularity of the hours, and left a second time. Then I offered myself as an assistant to Bruno, the executioner, but he said I was too old and weak for his work."

"You surely do not mean to say you would have accepted a situation under the common executioner?" said the Friar, with marked disgust in his tone. "At your time of life, you might have sought for some other employment, no matter how humble."

"Don't think ill of me, Reverend Father," said the old man. "Bruno is not the common execu-

tioner. He only applies the torture and punishments to the prisoners in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and executes those who are condemned to death for heresy. I would never have helped the town hangman at the execution of a thief or a murderer. No; I'm not so low as that."

"Is your friend Bruno much occupied at present?" inquired the Friar after a moment's silence.

"Every day in one way or another, but principally in the prisons of the Inquisition. We have not had many public executions for heresy lately; not more than four in the last fortnight. The Duke is away, and the Duchess has more of her own will than she would have if he were here. After all, she would be a brave woman were she not a heretic. Why, they say that Father Pelletario, the Duke's confessor, is positively more afraid of her than all the heretics in Geneva put together. But we are now at the river-side, and here is my boat. Get into it, and I will ferry you across."

Little conversation passed between the Friar and his companion during their passage across the river. Arrived at the other side, the old man fastened his boat to a post by the side of the water, and he and the Friar proceeded to the gate of San Giorgio.

"Can you tell me," said the Friar to his companion, "whether the Duchess is at present in Ferrara?"

"She is," replied the man. "She is living at the Palace of San Francesco, where she has a court of her own. They say the Duke and she are not friends. I hope it's the case, though of course I know nothing as to the truth of the statement. This, however, is certain, that when he is in Ferrara (he is now at his hunting seat at Belriguardo, they say) he lives in the Este palace, while she is at the Palace of San Francesco."

"But why should you be glad of a misunderstanding existing between the Duke and his wife?"

"Because I hate her, and the whole foreign troop with her."

"Did she ever do you any personal harm?"

"No, nor to anyone else that I know of; but she has tried to do a great deal of harm to their souls."

"In what way?" asked the Friar.

"By pretending to do a great deal of good to the poor and needy, helping them in every way that she can. Trying first of all to gain their love, for the purpose of handing them over to the enemy of mankind, whose agent I believe her to be."

"My son," said the Friar, "let me advise you to speak a little more cautiously. Remember that walls have ears, and the Duchess is still a powerful princess."

"Her time is coming though, and will soon be here," said the old man. "But I am astonished, Reverend Father, to hear you talk in her praise."

"I merely speak in your interest, my son," said the Friar mildly. "Even if there should be a disagreement between the Duke and his wife, depend upon it, he would punish you for speaking disrespectfully of the Duchess. With me of course

it will go no farther, but let me advise you not to speak in that way before others."

"You're right, Reverend Father," said the old man after a moment's reflection. "Thank you for the hint."

"I understand, then," said the Friar after a short silence, "that you live in Ferrara?"

"I do," replied the man, "and have lived in it since I was a child; and with the exception of the time when I was pressed as a soldier and made to join the army under the late Duke Alfonso, I have never been ten miles from it in my life. To say the truth, my experience on that occasion gave me little wish to roam. Night after night did I sleep on the damp field, or stand sentry on the river's bank to watch for the approach of the Venetians. Hardships enough I then endured. I had little to eat, no praise, and small pay. If I did my duty I was ordered to do more; if I attempted to avoid it, my captain flogged me. To end the matter, I was wounded in the last fight, and almost lost my life, and from that time to this I have never had any inclination to leave the city for more than a mile or two at a time."

"Of course you are well acquainted, then, with Ferrara?"

"No man better. I think I know every house in it, and every man, woman and child, that is to say, by sight, of course, for I haven't much to say to those above me."

"Perhaps you can tell me, then, if the Count Biagio Rosetti,—I mean the chief of the twelve Judges,—is in Ferrara at present?"

"He is, Reverend Father; I saw him in court this morning when I went to hear the trial of a friend of mine who had been accused of robbing a Jew. It was an unfortunate thing for him that the Judge Rosetti presided in the court, otherwise I'm sure he would have escaped."

"How so?"

"Because, being a Lutheran himself, he naturally favours all schismatics, infidels, and idolaters, and instead of dismissing the case he sentenced poor Beppo to be soundly flogged, as if to steal from a Jew was as bad as to rob a Christian."

They had now arrived at the gate of San Giorgio, when, to the Friar's dismay, he found it closed.

"Do not annoy yourself," said the old man, "I know the porter. He is a good Catholic, and will let one wearing your frock into the city without difficulty. I will speak to him and all will go well."

The man now proceeded to the wicket gate, and knocking at it requested that it might be opened, saying, that he had with him a Reverend Friar who was going to the convent of San Maurelio, but had been delayed on his road. The porter without hesitation opened the gates, and the Friar and the old man entered.

"And now, Reverend Father, I am near my lodging. Continue your road straight onward, and you will find your convent in the first street to the left."

The Friar thanked the man for his courtesy, but instead of entering the street as directed, he

turned round to see whether he was followed, and finding, after waiting a few moments, that no one approached him, he passed the street leading to the convent, and continued his road till he reached the Via della Pionponi. For some time after having entered the street he examined carefully the houses on each side, as if in search of one, but uncertain which it might be. Even after he had twice passed the whole length of the street he appeared undecided, and remained for several minutes in the centre of the road, waiting for some one to approach who might be able to give him the information he required. Presently he saw by the light of the moon, which had now risen, a young man leave the archway of one of the best houses in the street; and to him he determined to apply for information. Rapidly hurrying after him, he said,

"Pardon me, my son, for interrupting you, but could you tell me the house of the Count Biagio Rosetti, the chief of the twelve Judges?"

"It is but a few steps farther back," replied the young man. "It is the one I just left. Shall I conduct you to it?"

"There is no occasion, my son. I noticed the house when you left it. It is that with a light in the window of the room over the archway."

"It is," said the youth. "But you had better let me conduct you; the staircase is dark and dangerous, and I am sure the Judge would be angry with me, if, after I knew you wished to visit him, I allowed you to run any danger by letting you find your way alone."

"Do you know the Judge intimately, then?" inquired the Friar.

"Without vanity I may say I do," was the young man's reply. "He was my professor when I commenced my legal studies in Ferrara, and I have been intimate with him for more than three years."

"Are you an Italian?" asked the Friar.

"Why do you ask, Reverend Father?" said the youth, with some reserve. "You must either be unacquainted with Ferrara, or you must know that we are not accustomed here to answer questions that every stranger may put to us, without fully understanding his object."

"I should have thought, my son, that my habit alone would have been sufficient guarantee that I intended no harm."

"Hardly, Reverend Father," said the young man. "You know our saying, 'The cowl does not make the monk;' and if the proverb is true anywhere, it is certainly so in Ferrara."

"I meant no offence, my son," said the Friar. "My only reason for asking the question was, that you, while speaking Italian perfectly, appear to have a slight foreign accent."

"Possibly you expect I may be a Frenchman, or from Geneva," answered the youth, "and, as such, probably of the same religion as the Duchess."

"Once more, my son, I intended no offence. Why should you speak to me in the manner you do? You have kindly pointed out to me the house I was searching for, and I need trouble you no further."

"True, Reverend Father. Still, I am a free agent in the matter, and would prefer returning with you. If you are really a Friar, as your dress appears to indicate, so warm a professor of the Reformed doctrines as the Judge might like to have a witness on his side of the conversation which passes between you. If he finds my presence unnecessary or inconvenient, of course I shall leave immediately. But of this I am determined, if you persist in your visit, I shall return with you."

The Friar hesitated for some minutes, as if in doubt what steps to take. At last he said to the youth, "Are you also a follower of Calvin or Luther?"

"Again, Reverend Father, I must remind you it is not our habit in Ferrara to make a confidant of the first comer, however respectable his appearance may be. You must see yourself, that were I a Protestant, and therefore in danger of persecution for my religious opinions, a Capuchin Friar is hardly the person I should choose to confide my secret to. Once more, will you allow me to be your guide to the Judge's rooms? And let me add, that if you intend to visit him to-night you must decide quickly, or he will have retired to bed."

"I thank you for your offer, my son, and will follow you," said the Friar.

The youth now returned to the house he had quitted, and on reaching the gateway he took the Friar's hand, to lead him up the dark staircase, which with considerable difficulty they contrived to ascend, proving the truth of the youth's statement, that the Friar would find a guide necessary. On arriving at the first floor, the young man knocked at the door, and in a few moments footsteps were heard approaching it.

"Who is there?" inquired a voice from the inside.

"Good friends," was the reply. "It is I, Camille Gurdon. On leaving your house I was overtaken by a Capuchin Friar, who was seeking you, but did not know your abode, and I have brought him with me."

"Before I open the door I must know his errand, and who he is."

"I will explain who I am to your full satisfaction, my son," said the Friar, "if you will allow me to enter. What have you to fear from me? I am an old man, older than yourself, and besides that you have the support of the youth who has so kindly accompanied me to your house. For mercy's sake do not hesitate, but allow me to enter, for I am sick at heart, and my strength is utterly exhausted."

"But, Reverend Father," said the voice behind the door, "if you are a Capuchin Friar, what business can you have with me? Why should you ask hospitality of me when you have your own convent, one of the richest in Ferrara, to receive you? Do you know me?"

"Perfectly well," said the Friar, "although it is now some years since I saw you."

"Tell me your name."

"I cannot, before a stranger. But why do you hesitate to allow me to enter? As I said before, I am old and powerless, and you have nothing to

fear. This I promise you, if you will allow me a moment's interview, and you then desire me to leave your house, I will do so immediately, even though I should die of exhaustion before your door."

After a few moment's silence on both sides, the door was opened by a venerable-looking old man, in a velvet robe, with a black skull-cap on his head, and holding a lighted lamp in his hand. Surveying the Friar with great curiosity not unmingled with impatience, he said to him—

"Reverend Father, if you will neither tell me who you are, nor allow me to see your face, I must request you will immediately leave my house. I am but a bad guesser of riddles, and have no taste for mummary. Once more, let me know who you are, or begone."

The Friar advanced a few steps, and when in such a position that his youthful companion could not see his action, he raised his cowl sufficiently to allow the Judge to see his features, and then instantly replaced it. A marked change now came over the behaviour of the Judge to his visitor, and with much friendliness in his tone, he asked him to enter, and preceded him to the sitting-room, while the youth remained without to re-fasten the door. As soon as they had entered the room the Friar whispered to the Judge—

"Can you not dispense with the presence of that young man, as I wish to speak with you alone?"

"Just as you please," replied the Judge; "but you have nothing to fear from him. A stauncher adherent to our cause, Ferrara does not hold."

"If you know him," said the Friar, "I make no further objection. At the same time, I would rather speak with you alone. Were it only my own secret I had to keep, I should not mind his remaining, but I am intrusted with those of others as well."

"I will immediately dismiss him then," said the Judge. Then addressing the young man, who was now entering the room, he continued: "Camille, my son, you can leave us, as my friend wishes for some private conversation with me. We shall meet again to-morrow."

The young man bowed submissively to the Judge's remark, and after wishing him good evening, unbolted the door and quitted the house, leaving the Judge and the Capuchin Friar to continue their conversation undisturbed.

Here we must pause for a short time to speak more particularly of the mysterious monk—Bernardino Ochino. Of the many champions of Protestantism in Italy, few among them had laboured more zealously, or had done better service in the cause of truth, than he. Nature seemed to have especially endowed him both mentally and physically for the fatigues and dangers he had undertaken. In person he was somewhat above the middle height, strongly though not heavily formed, and altogether having a frame capable of enduring a vast amount of fatigue. His face was eminently handsome, even at the time of our narrative, when he was considerably more than sixty years of age.

In fact, when he was younger it would have been difficult to have found an individual possessing a more expressive countenance. Nor was the classical shape of his features the sole recommendation of his face—it beamed with intelligence and candour. Perhaps the most singular characteristic in his countenance was the extraordinary combination it displayed of mildness and determination. Nor was the expression an untruthful one; for while gentle to all, and anxious to avoid giving the slightest offence to any, yet no danger was sufficiently terrible to make him quit a labour he had once considered it a duty to his Maker to undertake.

Bernardino Ochino was born in the year 1487, at Sienna, in Tuscany, of obscure parents, and when young had been educated for the law; but being of a pious turn of mind, he determined to relinquish the legal profession and enter the Church. It is not known at what ecclesiastical seminary he prosecuted his studies, but after his ordination he appears to have joined the Franciscan Observantines, who were considered the strictest of all the orders of the regular clergy. In this order he continued for many years, gaining great popularity as a preacher. But rigid as the rules of the Observantines were, they were not sufficiently so for Bernardino, and he quitted them to enter as a simple friar the order of the Capuchins. Shortly after he had joined this new brotherhood, and long before he had fully adopted the Reformed principles, he began to turn his attention to the abuses which then existed in the Church, and he attacked with great severity the luxury and effeminacy of the priesthood. Had he commenced this attack some thirty years before, it is more than probable he would have been quickly silenced; but so weakened had the Church of Rome become by its own corruptions, that its heads readily perceived that if some reformation did not take place in the habits and manners of the clergy, it would be impossible to check the advance of the Reformed doctrines; and Bernardino, instead of being silenced and discouraged, was not only protected by the College of Cardinals, but though still a simple friar was raised to the dignity of Confessor to the Pope himself. No monk perhaps ever had greater power in his hands, or exercised it with more modesty than Ochino. Riches and honour both appeared utterly indifferent to him, and he continued to advance in the goodwill of every one.

By his own order, especially, Bernardino was greatly admired and beloved. Long after he had (in their estimation) degraded them by adopting heretical opinions, the annalist of their order speaking of him says, "In such estimation was he held, that he was esteemed incomparably the best preacher in Italy, and his powers of oratory and graceful action all powerfully enlisted the sympathy of his audience, and this the more so as the admirable tenour of his private life corresponded so perfectly with his doctrines." Although a favoured guest in the palaces of princes and nobles, he never

rode on horseback or in a carriage, but performed all his journeys on foot. Nor did he relinquish this habit even when far advanced in years. In the pulpit, he was admired by all; in fact, in such estimation were his sermons held that, when he preached in the immense Cathedrals of Ferrara and Modena, even standing-room could not be found for all those who wished to hear him. The Emperor Charles V., who when in Italy was a constant attendant at his sermons, said of him, "How great is the power of that man! he would make the very stones weep, if they could hear him." Sadolet and Bembo, who were far better judges of oratory than his Majesty, admitted Ochino to be the most eloquent preacher of his day. In the year 1538, Ochino was chosen General of the Order of the Capuchins, and, as a proof of the extraordinary respect he was held in, he was again, in another chapter, held at Whitsuntide, 1541, and in direct opposition to his own wishes, re-elected General of the Order, a mark of respect which had never yet been shown to one of its brotherhood.

So great was the fame which Bernardino Ochino had acquired as a preacher, that he was specially sent on a mission to those centres of Italian heresy, Ferrara and Modena, to counteract the march of Protestantism, which had already gained an immense number of converts. Although Ochino entered into his work with great energy and zeal, the natural honesty of his disposition would not allow him to shut his eyes to the abuses existing among the clergy of those two cities; and, while preaching eloquently the doctrines of the Church of Rome, he took occasion at the same time to lash most severely the corruptions which had been introduced among its clergy. But Ochino, in his attacks upon Protestantism, being actuated rather by an erroneous conception of the truth than any personal animosity to the Protestant professors, attempted by argument to convince them of their errors. In this, however, he signally failed. He entered into discussions and arguments with Peter Martyr, of Vermigli, and into correspondence with Calvin, on what he considered their erroneous doctrines; and tradition even says, that on more than one occasion he met the great leader of the Protestant faith in Italy, in the apartments of the Duchess Renée, where the arguments were carried on with great animation but perfect courtesy on both sides.

The results of these discussions were such as greatly to diminish the faith of Ochino in the doctrines of the Church of Rome. And being convinced of his errors in many points, he acknowledged them both in private and in the pulpit, to the great dissatisfaction of the Archbishop and clergy, who strongly remonstrated with him on his conduct. Ochino, however, was not a man, when once convinced, to allow any power to bias him, and he continued his preaching, which day by day began to assume more of a Protestant tendency, till, to the great dismay of the Catholic clergy, he openly declared himself a Reformer.

Now united with Peter Martyr, he occupied himself with establishing Protestant churches in Lucca, and other towns of Italy—the hatred of the Catholic priesthood increasing in proportion as his success was the greater, till at last, having undergone great persecutions, Ochino was banished from Italy. Being invited to visit England, he received a most hospitable reception from the Protector Somerset. After the accession of Mary to the throne, and the commencement of persecutions against the Protestants, he was obliged to quit England. He then wandered through Belgium, up the Rhine to Bâle, where he remained for some time, occupied with the affairs of the Church, and preaching to the different congregations of Italian emigrants who had been obliged to leave their country, where persecutions were being carried on with such terrible severity.

CHAPTER II.—THE JUDGE.

AFTER Camille had left them, and the door had been firmly closed, the Judge received his friend with every demonstration of affection and respect. Finding Ochino almost fainting from fatigue, his first act was to set before him some refreshments, of which the ex-monk, exhausted though he was, but very sparingly partook; for although he had some years before quitted the Capuchin order, and rejected as worthless many of their habits and customs, he still practised their abstemious manner of living. Setting apart the meat and wine which had been placed before him, he contented himself with some bread, fruit, and a glass of water. During the simple repast, his host sat opposite to him, silently watching him, and it was not till he had concluded that any continuous conversation ensued between them. Ochino, having reverently returned thanks to Heaven for the meal of which he had partaken, his host said to him—

“My dear friend, I hardly know whether to be pleased or sorry to see you; for although the gratification of meeting an old and dear brother in the faith is great indeed, I cannot disguise from myself the terrible danger you have incurred in thus visiting Ferrara.”

“For years past,” said Ochino, “I have been so used to persecution and danger that they have lost most of their terrors for me. I have my work to perform, and the danger must be more terrible than any I have ever yet met which can deter me. But first tell me in what state is our holy cause at present in Ferrara. Do those who have accepted the truth still hold manfully to it, or do the persecutions with which they are pressed drive them back to the errors of Rome?”

“Alas! my friend, here, as in every other part of Italy, the hand of the persecutor is strong upon us. Hundreds, under the pressure of punishment and persecution, have succumbed. All right of public meeting for the celebration of our religion has been withdrawn, and even the act of meeting together for prayer has been adjudged criminal.”

“But, surely,” said Ochino, “that must be contrary to the laws of Ferrara. One of the principal boasts of your citizens was, that liberty of conscience was permitted throughout the whole Duchy of Ferrara. Has that law, then, been abrogated?”

“The law remains in our statute books as fresh as the day it was first made, and the Duke himself, on his accession to power, swore to maintain it. But while in the cases of the Jew, the Idolater, or the Mahometan, the law still remains in its full force, it is denied, under the most severe penalties, to us Protestants.”

“But how can you as a Judge, sworn to administer the laws without partiality, allow your Protestant brethren to be persecuted contrary to the spirit of the law you are called upon to administer?”

“I am helpless in the case,” said the Judge. “A power—that of the Inquisition—has been established in Ferrara, which overrules all laws but its own; a power which claims to carry with it its own absolution, sanctifying, as a service acceptable to God, acts which set all God’s laws at defiance.”

“But still you remain in power. Can you not, therefore, insist upon the law being carried out in its integrity? or do your brother Judges oppose you?”

“My brother Judges, though the majority of them are Romanists, to do them justice, have endeavoured to maintain the law granting liberty of conscience to the inhabitants of Ferrara. Nay more, they made desperate efforts to maintain it in spite of the Inquisition itself. At last a case arose which gave a fair opportunity for a trial of strength between the civil and the ecclesiastical law as administered by the Inquisitors, and the result of the struggle was the triumph of the persecutor. A certain Giorgio Siculo, of whose efforts in the cause of truth you may have heard, was cited to appear before the Inquisition on a charge of heresy, and some of its officers were sent to arrest him; but on searching his house he could not be found, and his wife and family either could not or would not give any information as to where he was concealed, notwithstanding their being threatened with punishment should it be found out that they had not spoken the truth. Still Siculo was nowhere to be found. His wife was put to the torture, but nothing could extort the secret from her, if she knew it. The Inquisitors were determined not to be baffled of their prey, and not only sent abroad fresh spies to discover him, but offered heavy rewards to those who would betray him. They were on the point of succeeding, when late one night Siculo called on me, and begged me to use the power of the civil law to protect him, asserting that he had in no way contravened the laws of Ferrara. Nay more, that he had not even infringed the ecclesiastical law, inasmuch as he had never yet attacked the Church of Rome, although he had preached against its abuses.”

“I trust you granted his request,” said Ochino.

“I did. I concealed him in my own house till I had an opportunity of meeting in consultation

with the other Judges. They all agreed with me that Siculo's was a proper case to try whether the ecclesiastical laws administered by the Inquisition were superior to the civil laws of Ferrara. When I told them that Siculo was concealed in my house, my brother Judges advised that he should be placed for safety in one of the cells used for the detention of prisoners before their trial in the Palace of Justice. This was agreed to on the day before Siculo's case was to be publicly argued in court, and he surrendered himself into the hands of the officers of the civil justice, and notice was sent to the Inquisitors informing them of the fact. When they received the intelligence, they immediately demanded that

the prisoner should be delivered up to them, and incarcerated in the dungeons of the Inquisition, which possibly you may be aware has been established in the monastery of the Corpus Domini. This, of course, was objected to by the Judges, and the inquiry into Siculo's case was ordered to take place early the following morning, so as to let it be conducted with as little popular agitation as possible. The rumour, however, had spread abroad among the Protestant population that the inquiry was to take place, and long before daybreak many people began to collect before the Palace of Justice, ready to enter when the door should be opened. As day dawned, and objects became



clearer, some of them thought they distinctly perceived something hanging to the iron bars of one of the upper windows of the palace; and as the light became stronger, the object began to assume the shape of a human being. Broad daylight came, and, to the horror of every one, the figure proved to be the dead body of Giorgio Siculo, who had been in the night hanged at the bars of the palace window."

"But by whose order?" said Ochino, utterly aghast.

"That the order came from the Inquisition there can be no doubt," replied the Judge, "but beyond that all is veiled in mystery. My brother Judges,

Catholic as they are, were indignant at the act, and a rigid inquiry was instituted; but not a word could be heard, nor a fact learnt, which could throw the faintest light on the matter."

"But you surely do not mean to say that your investigations were attended with no result?"

"My friend, if you knew the state in which we now live in Ferrara, you would be little surprised."

"How is your public worship conducted?" inquired Ochino.

"Public worship, my friend," said the Judge, "has long since been abolished. As I told you before, the ecclesiastical courts have declared it

penal. Nor can we worship together privately, for so completely is Ferrara deluged by spies, that if three met together for private worship, the probability is that one of them would be a traitor. And how can it be otherwise, when they are taught that it is acceptable to Heaven to play the traitor on those nearest and dearest to them?"

"But the Duchess Renée," said Ochino, "surely she has not withdrawn her protection from the suffering Protestants in the city?"

"No, her willingness to shelter them is as great as ever; but, alas! her ability has been terribly curtailed. In consequence of what his Highness has been pleased to call her heretical opinions, he has separated from her, and assigned to her the palace at San Francesco, where she now holds her court; but even there a system of the most complete espionage is kept up. Although she is allowed to have her daughters Lucretia and Elionora with her, it is solely under the condition that the Jesuit Father Pelletario has the superintendence of their education. With the exception of my own daughter, Teresa, who since the death of my wife has acted as lady-in-waiting on the Duchess, and a few other officials attached to her person, all around her are bigoted Catholics."

A silence of a few moments now occurred, which was broken by Bernardino Ochino saying—

"You greatly grieve me by what you tell me respecting the Duchess, as my mission to Ferrara was almost purposely to see her."

"That she will receive you with a cordial welcome is certain," said the Judge; "but whether you will be safe, even under her roof, is very doubtful, so great is the anger of Rome against you. Did you intend stopping long in Ferrara?"

"Only a few days. An attempt has been made to form an Italian Church in Zurich for those of our countrymen who have fled from Italy for conscience sake, and I am intrusted with the charge of organising it. One portion of my mission was to spread abroad among the faithful the knowledge of the existence of this Church, to which they might fly for refuge when driven from their own country; and the second was to ask the pecuniary assistance and patronage of the Duchess. The first part I have to a considerable extent accomplished. By adopting my present dress I have been enabled to visit the churches at Aosta, Como, Lucca, and other towns, and, thank God! hitherto I have succeeded, although my labours have not been unattended with danger. But tell me, do you think the Duchess will be able to assist me?"

"Certainly she does not want the will; as for the means it is different. So continuous are the demands on her charity in the city, that I am afraid she will be able to afford you but little help. However, you had better see her to-morrow, and ask her for an asylum. It will be better for you to seek protection in her palace, for I tell you candidly, you will not be in safety here. With the exception of my friend Camille and my daughter Teresa, there is hardly a soul with whom I am inti-

mate on whom I could rely; and be assured that even powerful as the protection of the Duchess may be, it will not be more than sufficient to shield you from the attacks of the Inquisitors as soon as they know you are in the city."

"How should they know I am here?" said Ochino. "I have told no one my name, and I entered the city at dark, by the gate of San Giorgio, purposely avoiding the Palace, and keeping my cowl well over my features along the whole road. Beyond an ignorant old man whom I found in the marshes, and your friend Camille, I have spoken to no one."

"Still you are not in safety; for although I can fully depend upon Camille, who knows but the old man was a spy sent to dog your footsteps, or that he has not already given notice of your arrival? A law has been established, ordering, under the penalty of a heavy fine and a severe flogging, that notice shall be given to the police of any stranger entering the city, no matter in how humble circumstances; and of this you may be certain, that your arrival is already known. What answer did you make to the porter at the gate of San Giorgio?"

"I did not speak to him," said Ochino. "The old man my companion imagined that as I was in the dress of a Capuchin Friar, I intended lodging at the convent; and I did not undeceive him."

"And to-morrow the convent will be visited, and as the superior will certainly not be able to give a satisfactory answer to the inquiries, spies will be set upon your track. There is but one means by which you can escape, and that is by obtaining the protection of the Duchess Renée. Although, as I said before, her power is greatly diminished, still her spirit and courage are unabated; and if she offers you an asylum in her palace you will be safe, unless you fall a victim to some hidden plot. True, since the accession of his Majesty Henry II. to the throne of France, the fear of offending a French Princess bulks less in the eyes of Rome than it used to do. Still the experiment would be a dangerous one, as her Highness would be little inclined to allow an insult of the kind to be offered her with impunity."

"You stated that Pelletario, the Jesuit, is now confessor to the daughters of the Duchess. If I were to reside in the palace he would be sure to recognise me, for we were formerly intimate."

"Of Pelletario you have less to fear than of any of the others. He is a learned man and an elegant scholar, and I do not think that, unless stimulated by a very strong motive, he would take any overt act against so distinguished a man as yourself. No, all things considered, you cannot do better than appeal to the Duchess for protection. To-morrow morning, early, I will send to my daughter Teresa, and tell her to inform the Duchess that you have arrived, and that you request an interview with her. At the same time, let me advise you to change your dress to that of a civilian. To appear at court in the one you now wear might expose you to danger—for being no longer a brother of the order, you have no right to

it. But you must be tired with your day's journey. I will now show you to your bed-room, where you may remain in perfect safety at any rate till to-morrow, as, from motives of prudence, I allow no servants to sleep in my apartments, and therefore, beyond Camille, no one will know that you are here."

Ochino and his host now rose to separate for the night, but before doing so the former said—

"But tell me who is this young man who conducted me into your presence? From what he told me he seemed to be an intimate friend of yours."

"His father is a merchant in Geneva, and an intimate friend of the illustrious John Calvin. When younger, Camille entered the French army, but quitted it to study law, and became a pupil at the university. He was introduced to me by one of the professors, and has since been a constant visitor here. I almost look upon him as a pupil, for although I relinquished my position as professor at the university when I was appointed senior Judge twelve months ago, I still feel sufficient interest in

him to continue the superintendence of his studies. Next year he is to return to Geneva, where he intends to commence practising. I will introduce you to him, and I am sure you will like him. You will doubtless be requested by the Duchess to preach in a small chapel she has fitted up in the palace, the only place in Ferrara where a few can gather together to hear the word. It will be indeed a treat to us all, for it is now some months since we have been able to join together in worship; for although her Highness, when we have a minister bold enough to visit us, would willingly receive any one thirsting after the truth, the experiment is too dangerous to allow it to be often repeated. But I will detain you no longer, my friend. Sleep securely to-night; you shall not be disturbed. When breakfast has been prepared, I shall dismiss my servant, and you may then leave your room in safety. Afterwards I will conduct you to the palace."

The Judge then showed Ochino his room, and the two friends separated for the night.



CHAPTER III.—THE DUCHESS.



ALTHOUGH the Duchess Renée no longer resided with the Duke in the Este Palace, it can hardly be said that a direct separation had taken place between them. He continued to treat her with marked respect and attention, and supported her in all matters except those

connected with religion; and her authority seems to have been as much respected in Ferrara during the absence of her husband as that of the Duke himself.

For many years Renée appears to have wavered between Protestantism and Romanism, greatly favouring the former, while at the same time openly professing herself a member of the Romish creed. Although we find her sheltering Calvin, Ochino, Pietro Martire Vermigli, Clement Marot, and many other Protestant celebrities, and accepting with pleasure the dedication of Brucioli's translation of the Bible into Italian, we find her, outwardly at least, joining in several Catholic ceremonies without hesitation. Even as late as the year 1543, Muratori tells us that the Duchess, attended by seventy-two ladies, dressed in black silk ornamented with gold embroidery, all on horseback, followed by many carriages filled with other ladies, and by the Duke himself with gentlemen on horseback, rode out to the gate of San Giorgio to meet the sovereign Pontiff Paul III., when he visited Ferrara. They then accompanied him in his procession to the Cathedral, where he celebrated the Pontifical Mass, and presented the Duke with a golden rose, and a sword and hat, which he blessed. The Duke testified the greatest joy at the honour the Pope had done him, and kissed the feet of his Holiness with the utmost reverence. Renée's attendance at this mass is emphatically recorded by more than one of the Roman Catholic historians of Ferrara, as proving that at that time her Highness was still a faithful child of the Church of Rome. Muratori also tells us that the Pope, when he quitted the city, presented the Duchess with a costly diamond, and a jewel composed of diamonds in the form of a flower, in addition to many gifts to her children.

Renée's attendance at mass on the occasion of the visit of Pope Paul III., was her last, it appears, for many years; in fact from that time her opinions seem to have taken a decided change in favour of Protestantism, till at length she openly renounced the Roman Catholic faith. Of the proximate cause of the change it would be difficult to form any correct conclusion, though it is more than probable it arose from disgust at the duplicity shown by the Pontiff on his visit to Ferrara, and her abhorrence of the cruelties of the Inquisition which were afterwards practised by his authority, and which tribunal he had, when visiting Ferrara and expressing all outward love and affection for its inhabitants, brought with him in his train, and established in the city. Two years later his Holiness addressed a brief to the authorities of Ferrara, requiring them to institute a strict investigation into the conduct of every person, of whatever rank or order, suspected of entertaining erroneous religious opinions, and after having taken depositions to apply the torture, and when the trial was completed to transmit the whole process to Rome for judgment.

It was on the publication of this order of the Pope that Renée appears first to have openly opposed the Church of Rome, which she did by taking under her protection the Protestants of Ferrara, and that with so much vigour, that for five years the order of the Pope remained little better than a dead letter. But while the Duchess and her advisers, true to the policy of the Protestant Reformers, boldly denounced the errors of their antagonists, and sought by open argument to support their cause, the Inquisition adopted the usual crafty policy it was in the habit of showing when its opponents were strong. The Inquisitors established agents in all parts of the city, who set secretly to work, endeavouring by every means in their power to undermine the new principles which had taken root throughout the whole of Ferrara.

So vigorous was the onslaught made by the Inquisition, that resolute and courageous as the Duchess Renée had become in the Protestant cause, she seemed almost paralyzed at the power brought against her; and for some short time appears considerably to have relaxed her wonted energy. In fact, so little opposition did she appear to offer, that those who had hitherto looked upon her as their champion, now seemed to lose heart. The news of her inaction at last reached the ears of Calvin, who was then resident in Geneva, and for whom she always appeared to entertain a great respect. In a letter written to her, and which is still in existence, he begs of her again to exert herself in the cause of the unfortunate, and to protect those suffering for religion's sake, urging her particularly not to listen to the arguments of the priests attached to her court, who would lead her from the truth.

She appears to have received fresh impulse from Calvin's letter, and her protection of the Protestants not only became more open, but she now

boldly announced herself one of their number, and succeeded to a certain extent in stopping the violence of the persecution. At length a circumstance occurred—the death of Francis I. of France—which deprived her of a good and powerful ally. From Henry II., himself a bigot, she could expect no support, and the Inquisitors knowing this but too well, carried on their persecutions with greater vigour, and even implored the Duke to incarcerate his wife, unless she returned to the Catholic faith.

The Duke, though willing to oblige the Inquisitors, had too much respect for his wife to obey their request, and he hesitated to proceed with anything like severity against the mother of his children, and a daughter of France. The Inquisition still pressed upon him the necessity of insisting on his wife again adopting the Catholic faith, and the Duke promised he would take the subject into his serious consideration, although he would not do so until he had tried every conciliatory means of bringing her round to what he considered a better frame of mind. With this intent he commissioned his confessor, the Jesuit Pelletario, to argue with her in order to convince her of the error of her ways, and endeavour by every means in his power to induce her to return to the Church of Rome. The Duke's policy, however, was useless, for Renée would not listen to the arguments of the Jesuit, and even refused to receive him into her presence, and this was done in so open and abrupt a manner as to rouse the anger of the Duke, who determined, on his part, to show some of that energy which his wife possessed in so marked a degree. He now told her, with an amount of determination which must have surprised her, that for the future he should no longer consider her as his wife, but that to prevent open scandal he would assign to her the Palace of San Francesco. Here she could maintain a court of her own, where her authority would be as strictly obeyed as if she were residing with him in the Este Palace; but her two daughters were no longer to be with her.

This was indeed a cruel blow to Renée, who was most tenderly attached to her children; and she earnestly implored her husband to alter his decision. Angry as the Duke was at what he considered the obstinacy of his wife, he had still too much respect for her to be indifferent to her entreaties; while, on the other hand, he was strongly urged by the Inquisitors to maintain the resolution he had come to. At last a compromise was arrived at. Her two daughters were allowed to remain with her, under the sole condition that she should not tamper with their religion, and that they should be under the spiritual care of the Jesuit Pelletario. All other members of her court, Renée was to choose for herself, and they were to be allowed, while under her roof, to practise the Reformed religion. The Duchess had no alternative but to accept these conditions. She removed to the palace of San Francesco, choosing her officials as much as possible from Protestant families, though

even among these there was too much reason to believe many were but spies in disguise.

As soon as Renée heard of the arrival of Bernardino Ochino in Ferrara, she immediately offered him shelter and protection, at the same time advising him to assume some other name, for powerful as her protection still was within the walls of San Francesco, it would hardly be sufficient to defend him from the fury of the Inquisitors did they discover he had had the audacity again to make his appearance in the city.

In the afternoon of the same day, Ochino, in the quiet dress of a citizen of Ferrara, accompanied by the Judge Rosetti, proceeded to a secluded door of the palace which opened into a back street, and which had already been used for the purpose of sheltering the fugitive and the oppressed. On their arrival, the door was opened from the interior by an aged servant of foreign aspect, who conducted Ochino and the Judge up a narrow staircase which led into a corridor, from whence a door opened into a private room. Here they were ushered into the presence of the Duchess, who was attended by Teresa and another lady in waiting.

On seeing Ochino enter, the Duchess rose from her chair to receive him, when he bent on his knee to kiss her hand. She raised him, and insisted on his taking a seat by her side. After a few conventional sentences of welcome, the Duchess said to him—

“Have I correctly understood Teresa Rosetti that the object of your visit to Ferrara is to obtain help for the establishment of a church and refuge in Zurich, where those persecuted in Italy for the truth's sake may fly for shelter and protection?”

“It is, noble lady,” said Ochino; “and I trust with your powerful assistance I shall be able to accomplish it.”

“Alas! my friend,” said Renée, “my power, as Rosetti will tell you, is but limited indeed.” Then noticing an expression of doubt on Ochino's countenance, Renée continued—“Nay, believe me, I do not speak without experience: my power is almost gone. If you doubt me, inquire what was the fate of Fannio of Faeuza. In vain did I use my authority to save him.”

“And is it really true,” said Ochino, “that the worthy man has suffered for the faith? When in London, I heard that he had been arrested and put upon his trial; and although I knew how much he had raised the anger of the court of Rome by his preaching, I thanked God that he had so powerful a protector as your Highness, and I felt assured that in the end he would escape.”

“Alas! you far over-rated my powers,” said the Duchess. “And yet to save him I exerted them to the utmost. He was tried by the Inquisition, and having openly avowed that he was a Lutheran, was judged guilty, and his sentence sent for confirmation to Rome. A month afterwards he was burnt in the Piazza, and his ashes thrown into the river. Although discouraged by my failure, I still exerted myself to save others, but all in vain. You may depend, however, upon

what little authority I have being used in your favour. But were you well advised to undertake this mission yourself? Had you written to me, I should have been equally willing to aid you without your incurring the terrible risk you do by visiting this unhappy city."

"I well calculated," replied Ochino, "all the chances that should be against me, although I admit I was little prepared to hear how terribly our cause in Ferrara has fallen. Still I fear nothing. The same God who protected me in the different cities I have traversed on my road hither will protect me here. But should He in his wisdom allow me to fall into the hands of the persecutor, I am convinced it will be for some good reason, and I shall submit to my fate with resignation."

"It shall be from no fault of mine," said Renée, "if you do not quit Ferrara with as much safety as you entered it. At the same time, great prudence and caution must be used. You are too well-known here not to be recognised if you are seen abroad, and therefore I would advise you not to leave the palace. While within its walls, I trust I shall be able to protect you, though even of this I am not certain. Once seen outside, your doom will be sealed. How long do you intend to remain among us?"

"The extent of my visit will not be beyond a few days," said Ochino, "as I wish to proceed to Venice, where I have some friends who will also protect me, and where I expect to receive liberal contributions to my work."

"Are you aware," said Renée, "that the Inquisition is also established in Venice, and that you will hardly be safer there than in Ferrara?"

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Ochino; "although the Inquisition is certainly established in Venice, the council would only allow it under the condition that a judge of the civil law should sit on all cases, and have equal power with the inquisitor; and that unless both concur in a judgment, it should not be carried out. In Ferrara, on the other hand, as we have too good reason to know, the civil law is powerless against the Inquisition. In Venice, believe me, there is far less danger than here."

"Well, that being the case, thought must be taken in what manner you can reach Venice."

"Possibly the safest and easiest plan will be for me to descend the river till I reach Commacchio, where there will be no difficulty in finding a vessel to carry me to Venice. But before leaving Ferrara," continued Ochino, "I trust I shall have an opportunity of seeing and exhorting those of our faith to have courage under persecution and continue in the right way."

"It would be cruel indeed on my part," said Renée, "to attempt to deprive them of so great a consolation, and every assistance I can afford, both to them and to you, I will willingly give. This evening after nightfall (for it would be dangerous to attempt it earlier) my private chapel shall be prepared, and all those of our religion whom I can trust, shall be invited to attend. Our congregation," the Duchess continued, smiling sadly, "will

appear small indeed compared with that you addressed the last time you preached in Ferrara, when, you remember, our immense cathedral was far too small to hold those who rushed to hear you. But be assured of this, a more devout assembly, or one more earnestly seeking consolation and encouragement, no preacher ever had, than those who will meet you here to-night. Still, they must be selected with care and caution, for unhappily there are many of the children of Judas among us, who would readily betray their Master."

The conversation then turned on the prospects of the Protestant cause in Switzerland, and especially in Zurich. Afterwards Ochino narrated to the Duchess the different adventures he had passed through since he had escaped from Italy, dwelling particularly on his sojourn in England, and the friendly reception he had received from the Protector.* The intelligent, though somewhat plain, features of the Duchess, kindled up with indignation when, with all his graphic powers, Ochino described the persecutions in Smithfield, and the cruelties practised on the unfortunate reformers after the accession of Mary to the throne.

"And is the monarch of that country a woman?" asked Renée. "I blush for our sex. O that I had been in her place!" She continued to pace the room backwards and forwards for some time, none caring to interrupt her in her exhibition of indignation, when suddenly she turned round to Ochino—"But how long has this monster been upon the throne? I thought the monarch of England was a young king." Then, turning sharply on Teresa, she said, "Was it not the catechism written especially for his instruction that I ordered to be translated into Italian, and printed in Venice?† How is it possible, with such a religion as that teaches, that the English people can have again relapsed into Romanism?"

"But, your Highness," said Ochino, "his Majesty King Edward VI. died when quite a youth, two years since; and the Princess Mary, who had been educated in the Catholic faith, instigated by her husband, Philip of Spain, commenced a system of terror and persecution, to drive what they call heresy out of the land."

"Do you think they will succeed?" asked Renée.

"There is no chance of it, your Highness," replied Ochino. "The Queen and her husband but little know the temper of the people over whom they rule. The great mass of their subjects

* Shortly after his arrival in London, Ochino wrote a very curious but clever work on the unjust pretensions of the Pope of Rome. Being then but little acquainted with the English language, he wrote it first in Latin, and then requested his friend, Master Joán Ponet, D.D., to translate it for him. It is printed in black letter, and was published in the year 1549. Its dedication runs thus:—

"To the Most Myghtie and Most Excellent Prince Edwarde the Syxthe, by the Grace of God King of England, Fraunce, and Ireland, and on earth Supreme head of the church of England and Ireland, Bernadinus Ochinus Senensis wisbeth all Felicitie."

† This catechism appears to have been translated into Italian by Florio, with the title, "Catechismo, cive forma breve per ammaestrare i fanciulle; la quale di tutta la 'Christiana disciplina contiene la somma.' Tradotta di Latino per M. A. Florio." Small 8vo, but without place, date, or printer's name. The existence of this work was unknown to the learned Dr. M'Crie, yet it was inserted in the first Roman index in the list of books expressly prohibited, and must therefore have been well known.

are sincere Protestants, and although out of respect for the laws, they may submit for a time to the persecutions, depend upon it every fresh funeral pile which is lighted in Smithfield but hurries on the day of retribution."

"Is the Queen then not beloved by her subjects?" inquired Renée.

"As little as it is possible for a monarch to be. Great as may be the love of the English in general for their monarchs, all seem to look with satisfaction rather than pity on the infirm state of her health."

"Is her malady considered fatal?" asked Renée.

"So it is stated, your Highness; but, of course, I am no authority on the subject."

"And who will be her successor?"

"The Princess Elizabeth, it is believed."

"And what religion does she profess?" inquired Renée. "Is she still in the errors of Romanism, or has she adopted the reformed faith?"

"A warmer supporter of the Protestant faith does not exist in Europe," replied Ochino. "The eyes of all Protestants are turned towards her. Probably it is the hope that she will soon succeed to the throne, and that only, which keeps the English people from rising against the present Queen."

The conversation continued some time longer on the same subject, and Renée then gave orders to an attendant that an apartment should be provided in the palace where her visitor should not be subjected to interruption. The audience with the Duchess then terminated, upon the understanding that at nightfall they should re-assemble, with as many Protestant friends as possible.

After the Duchess had left them, Rosetti introduced his daughter to Ochino. There was no little pride in her father's countenance as he did so, for a more lovely young girl than Teresa it would have been difficult to find in Ferrara. She was about seventeen years of age, slim and graceful, and of that peculiarly fair complexion which is so often found among girls who have been brought up in the neighbourhood of marshy lands, but without the sickly appearance which generally characterizes them. Her features were delicate—an exquisitely formed nose, a small mouth, large dark confiding eyes, black and finely traced eyebrows, an open clear forehead, and beautiful golden hair, which hung down her back and over her shoulders. In the expression of her countenance there was something extremely ingenuous and amiable, conveying an idea of truthfulness so strongly marked, that it appeared impossible, under any circumstances, to doubt a word she uttered.

Ochino was evidently struck with the beauty of the young girl, and expressed much pleasure at seeing her. He entered freely into conversation with her, and told her that he had two daughters, who with their mother were now in Basle, and that when times were more settled he hoped he should have the pleasure of introducing them to her. Then turning to Rosetti he said—

"If I remember rightly, you had another daughter:

is she also living under the protection of the Duchess?"

"Alas! my friend, I have now but one child. My other daughter died with her mother during the last visitation of the plague in Ferrara. Teresa is the only relative left me in the world."

"It is fortunate," said Ochino, "to have found for her so powerful a protectress as the Duchess."

"I am happy to say her Highness is not the only protectress she has," replied the Judge. "Protestant as my daughter is, the two young Princesses have conceived for her a great affection, and she is allowed to associate with them freely under the express stipulation that no conversation on religious matters passes between them."

"Are you not afraid," asked Ochino, "that acting as they are under the authority of the Jesuit Pelletario, they may endeavour to persuade her to quit the true faith?"

"In the first place," said the Judge, taking his daughter's hand, "I am sure my dear child is too strongly imbued with the principles of her faith, to dread anything either from the teachings of the Jesuit Pelletario, or the influence of her young friends, much as she is attached to them. But there is still another safeguard for her. When the Duchess took up her residence here in the Palace of San Francesco, it was expressly stipulated that if her Highness did not attempt to interfere with the religion of her daughters, there should be no interference with those of her court who professed the Reformed doctrines, and I am bound to say, at all events as regards my child, that no attempt has hitherto been made to tamper with her faith."

The conversation was here interrupted by a message from the Duchess requesting Teresa's presence. Bidding her father and Ochino farewell till they should meet again in the evening, she immediately left the room. As soon as she had quitted them Ochino said to his friend,—

"You must feel your house dreary indeed without the presence of your amiable child."

"That I would willingly have her with me is true," said her father, "but after all it is a great consolation to me to know she is in a place of safety. Were she residing with me I should be under a double anxiety. First, from the continual attacks which would be made on her religion, and in the next place, from the admiration she would be likely to excite among the youths of Ferrara, for I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, and without a father's prejudice in her favour, that her personal attractions are of no common order. Were she to reside in my house under the care of a *gouvernante*, it would certainly be a great satisfaction to have her near me, but then again, her being in greater security under the same roof with the Duchess, relieves me from the anxiety I might otherwise feel. As it is she has the power of visiting me, accompanied by one of the elder female attendants of the Duchess, whenever she pleases, and on my part, I have free entrance to the Palace. But now, changing the conversation, are there any particular

persons whom you wish invited to meet you this evening? If so, you have but to name them, and I will take means to request their presence."

Ochino now mentioned the names of several he wished to see.

"Alas! my friend," said the Judge, "not one of those you have mentioned are to be found in Ferrara. More than one has already suffered death for righteousness' sake, several are in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and others have fled for refuge to Switzerland. You will find no longer among us those bright names which shed so great a glory over Ferrara. Not one among them has been allowed to remain. Even the twenty-four ladies and courtiers professing the Reformed faith, who arrived with the Duchess in Ferrara, have all been banished, and those that now serve her are permitted to do so solely because it is imagined they are not possessed of sufficient intellectual faculties to be of the slightest danger to the religion of the State. Still, the faith is strong among us, although it is scattered, and we dare hardly whisper our religious belief to those who are nearest and dearest to us. Between this and nightfall, I will, assisted by Camille Gurdon, invite as many of our faith as may be safely trusted to meet us at the Palace, and when our prayers are over they shall be severally introduced to you. Although your visit to Ferrara may have been attended with great fatigue and danger, you will have the satisfaction of knowing, when you quit us, that you have done good service in our cause, by renewing in the bosoms of many of us some hope for the future. I will also endeavour to collect funds for your work in Zurich, and I have every reason to hope my appeal will be responded to with liberality. Many ardent adherents of our creed are still to be found among the poor and ignorant, but among the educated and wealthy the proportion is still greater. Now excuse me, my friend, if I leave you. I have no doubt her Highness will see you again before evening. You had better arrange with her in what way you should leave Ferrara, for although the longer you stay with us the greater our satisfaction, the precautions which must be taken to insure your escape will occupy some time, and the sooner we commence preparations the more likely they are to be carried out in safety."

CHAPTER IV.—"WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER," ETC.

As predicted by Renée, the meeting in the evening to hear the preaching of Ochino formed a singular contrast to that which a few years before had taken place in the cathedral. Then the body-guard of the Duke were called out to maintain order among those who rushed to hear the celebrated man; now, the few who wished to be present, quietly and stealthily made their way in the darkness of night, in the shadow of the projecting roofs of the houses to the back entrance of the palace, carefully and timidly glancing round to see if they were watched, or followed, and frequently turning out of their way if

they met any one whom they, rightly or wrongly, suspected. Singly, or at the most in groups of two or three, they arrived at the wicket door of the palace, which was speedily opened to them when they knocked; and they were received by Camille and an aged female attendant of the Duchess, who conducted them to the private chapel, where seats were assigned them. As they took their places, and offered up the customary short prayer, before uncovering their faces they glanced stealthily round to ascertain whom they knew, looking suspiciously on the others lest there might be some traitor to the cause. By degrees, however, they became bolder, and smiles of congratulation, brotherly love, and welcome, became perceptible on their countenances, and low whisperings passed between them. And then again, as others entered, the eyes of those already assembled would turn on them, eager to distinguish whether they were friends or foes, and as they were recognised, a smile of greeting passed between them, and so on with all fresh comers, till at last the chapel was completely filled. All suspicion then appeared to vanish, and a look of unfeigned satisfaction, kindness, and affection seemed to illumine the features of the whole congregation. One thing was particularly noticeable among the assembly. Although many women were present, there were no children or young girls, proving that parental love had been too powerful to allow them to expose their offspring to the dangers which might attend a meeting of the kind. It was nearly nine o'clock before all had arrived; and the Duchess and ladies of her court then entered and took their seats in front of the pulpit, which was shortly afterwards occupied by Ochino.

The service strongly resembled that in use among the Congregationalists in England in the present day. Some hymns of great simplicity and beauty were sung, and different portions of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, were read in Italian from Bruccioli's translation.* A lengthened prayer of great fervour and piety was offered up by Ochino, and then, after another hymn had been sung by the congregation, he rose to commence his sermon. His text was Acts xvii. 23.

The first portion of his address consisted in drawing a comparison between the difficulties and dangers experienced by the Apostles in promulgating the doctrines of Christianity among the idolaters, and those experienced by the Reformers of the Church of Rome in abolishing its idolatries and abuses. He then went into a lengthened description of the persecution the brethren were at that time suffering in all parts of Europe. He drew a vivid picture of what the faithful were then enduring, extending from England in the north to the extreme shores of the Mediterranean in the south, from the eastern extremity of civilised Europe to the western point of Spain. He dwelt with great force on the cruelties practised upon

* Bruccioli's was the first entire edition of the Holy Scriptures translated into Italian. He dedicated it, by express permission, to the Duchess Renée. It is said that as many as seventeen editions of it were published before its sale was prohibited by the Inquisition.

the unoffending Reformers in the latter country, and showed how the Inquisition, which had there taken even firmer root than in Italy, tyrannized over the souls and bodies of men, dissolving the most sacred ties among them—the love of the child for its parent, and the husband for the wife. The priests taught that the nearer the tie of relationship, the greater and more pleasing was the sacrifice to God of those who denounced to the Holy Tribunal the Protestant tendencies of their relations. He then passed over to France, where he described the noble efforts of the Reformers and the persecutions which were brought to bear on them. He informed his hearers that when the temporal authorities seemed disposed to show mercy, the priests had sent to Spain for Oriz the Jesuit, a man to whom the sentiment of pity was unknown, to assume the direction of the Inquisition in that country. Thanks, however, to the spirit of justice in that noble nation, it was yet undecided whether he would be allowed to remain, as the persecutions he had organized disgusted even the most bigoted of the lay members of the Catholic Church in France. He showed them how the Catholic Princes of Germany were striving, though ineffectually, to stamp out the Reformation; how in Flanders the Spanish Governors, stimulated by the officials of the Spanish Inquisition, had already executed more than sixty thousand Protestants. Even in England, that country which displayed so glorious an example to the rest of Europe in setting boldly at defiance the despotism of the Church of Rome, a bigoted Catholic monarch sat on the throne, persecuting with relentless fury all who would not submit to the dominion of the Popes, and banishing from the hospitable shores of the country those sufferers for the truth's sake who had fled to it for protection in the previous reign.

"But, my friends," continued Ochino, "let us now turn to the brighter side of the picture. Notwithstanding the machinations of the Inquisition in France, and the imprisonments and executions suffered by the Reformers, the cause of truth appears to be daily gaining ground, and the courage of the persecuted rises. In Germany, with each successive persecution, Protestantism seems to take stronger root. In the Netherlands the blood of martyrs so freely shed has had but the effect of creating more converts. In England, Heaven not only supports the persecuted, but the whole nation, indignant at the cruelties practised, will but for a very short time longer submit to them. The health of the present monarch is failing fast, and the Princess, her successor, is strongly attached to the Reformed doctrines. And although I cannot state that the prospects of our Church in Spain and in our own beloved country are at present very hopeful, depend upon it, the justice and power of the Almighty are too strong to allow the persecutor to continue his course unchecked.

"And now, my friends, I come to the most painful part of my discourse. I have heard with

deep sorrow that many of our dear brethren have again relapsed into the errors of Romanism and practise the idolatry of the Mass. Painful as their fall is to us, we should not sorrow as those without hope, but energetically try not only to shield and support to the utmost in our power those still among us, but endeavour to recall back again into the fold those who have quitted us. Remember that the Holy Scriptures prove to us, that those who have been weak in their faith have occasionally risen again into strength. They tell us that, although St. Peter in fear denied his Master, his courage rose again, and like a true soldier of the Cross, he bore it to the death. At the same time, this episode in St. Peter's life is not given us as an example to follow, but one to avoid. It teaches us to understand the infinite mercy of Christ in again receiving into his love his weak-hearted disciple.

"But you may ask in what manner, while labouring under persecution, or in daily dread of some active oppression, and unguided by the ministers of religion, are you to escape the snares which beset you on every side. Here, my dear brethren, let me point out to you the unappreciable advantage possessed by you over those who are members of the Church of Rome. Although the presence of a minister of religion is advantageous, you have that, in the absence of your minister, which may guide your footsteps with unflinching security—the Holy Scriptures, which are now circulated among you in your own language, so that all may read and understand. The whole College of Cardinals cannot more clearly enlighten a believer in the Church of Rome, than that Book is able to enlighten the poorest among you. Let me beg of you, then, to study it attentively, and if you earnestly pray to the Lord to give you the gift of understanding, rely upon it your prayer will not be made in vain.

"Is it not a great consolation taught you in that Book, that you have the power, without the intermediation of the priesthood, to apply directly to the Almighty for protection and assistance? Explain, then, candidly your disease to the Great Physician, show Him openly your wound that He may heal you. Is it not the direct and special function of Christ to destroy sin and wash out all our iniquities? Never forget that God is all-powerful, and that without his permission not a hair can fall from your head. Do not allow yourselves to be influenced by following the example of the multitude, but only that of the saints. Let the word of the Lord be as a lamp before you, for if you do not read and believe the word which was written for your enlightenment, you will find many stumbling-blocks in your path through the world. The Lord knows that in addressing these exhortations to you, I am actuated only by the interest I feel in your spiritual welfare, and I trust you will receive my words as I mean them. I pray God to enlighten you, and strengthen you in Jesus Christ, that you may triumph over Satan, the world, and the flesh, and in the end obtain the crown which belongs only to those who have conquered. Amen."

When Ochino had concluded his sermon, the breathless silence which had hitherto reigned in the chapel was partially broken, and a murmur of admiration arose. Another hymn was then sung, a short parting prayer offered up, and the service terminated.

But instead of the congregation quitting the chapel, they flocked round the pulpit, eager to approach nearer to the preacher when he left it, and that with so much earnestness, that it was difficult to keep them from inconveniencing the Duchess and her suite. When Ochino descended the pulpit steps, the Duchess advanced towards him, and warmly thanked him for his admirable discourse, carrying with it, as it did, consolation and comfort into the minds of those greatly needing them. The commendations of the Duchess finished, the congregation now threw off all subjection, and earnestly thanked the preacher for the encouragement and consolation he had given them, which they assured him they would treasure up in their hearts to strengthen them in the days of persecution. So earnest were they in their manner of addressing him, that Ochino, accustomed as he was to the compliments and praises of those who heard him, was not proof against it, and the tears rolled down his venerable face as he thanked them for their kindness and good feeling. Possibly his tears might have been in some part caused by the idea which doubtless crossed his mind, that in a short time those who now pressed so eagerly around him, would be given over into the power of the persecutor, in whose hands no mercy would be shown them.

Among those who came forward to kiss the hand of the preacher was the venerable mother of the celebrated Olympia Morata, who had long since been obliged to fly from Ferrara to avoid the persecutions with which she was threatened, for neither youth, talent, beauty, nor all combined, seemed capable of exciting a spark of pity in the minds of the Inquisitors. When the old lady, now in her eightieth year, was introduced to Ochino, he received her with great respect and affection. He told her he had had the pleasure of seeing her daughter and her husband as he came through Heidelberg, and described the love in which they were held by the inhabitants of that city, and how much Olympia gloried in the fact, that in spite of all the persecutions which had taken place in Ferrara, her venerable mother had kept true to the faith. Then again were introduced to Ochino many of the relatives of those who had been banished, or had already suffered death for the truth's sake, to all of whom he had some kind word to say.

So cheering was the influence of that one man on the few members present of the Protestant flock which yet remained in Ferrara, that all seemed to forget the misery which surrounded them, and the dangers with which they were threatened. Instead of dispersing they formed themselves in knots, and entering the corridor leading to the chapel, conversed together with great friendliness. The Duchess Renée also greatly exerted herself to please her guests, conversing with them with much affability.

Among the many to whom she spoke, there was not one whom she addressed with greater condescension or kind feeling than Camille Gurdon. She complimented him warmly on the exertions he had shown in the cause of truth, and begged him still to go on in the same way, and that he would receive his reward for it in the next world, and not improbably in this as well.

As she said this, Camille, involuntarily perhaps, cast an anxious glance on Teresa who stood by the side of the Duchess. The glance, however, was unperceived by Renée, otherwise she might have arrived at the conclusion, that the hope of reward entertained by Camille Gurdon in this world was not so far distant as she herself imagined. But if his behaviour passed unnoticed by the Duchess, not so by the young girl who stood by her side, and a blush as deep as crimson spread over her face, which seemed to have so painful an effect on her that she dropped behind the Duchess. Gurdon also, perceiving the effect his glance had produced, blushed deeply and cast his eyes on the ground. The Duchess noticed him, and mistaking the cause of his confusion, said to him,

"Nay, do not feel embarrassed at what I have said to you, but go on in the same honourable course you have hitherto done, protecting the unfortunate, administering comfort to those in distress, and keeping together in the fold those whom the wolves among us would destroy. I have frequently heard of your good works, and now, on my own part, and that of my fellow-sufferers, I thank you for them." Then turning to Ochino, who had now joined them, she said: "A more useful or energetic member of our party we have not among us, and I only hope that Heaven will grant him health and strength to continue the good work he has put his hand to."

Ochino also complimented the young man on the interest he had taken in the movement, and they then entered into conversation on the position and hopes of the Reformers in Geneva. Camille explained to him how strong was the influence of Calvin among the churches in that part of Switzerland, and with what devotion the inhabitants of the town regarded him.

"And may they long continue to do so," said Ochino, "for he is one of our brightest lights."

"Earnestly I wish," said Renée, "he would again visit us, although I am afraid there is but little chance of our seeing him. In a letter I received from him a few days ago, he told me, that much as he wished to visit Ferrara, so numerous and responsible were his calls, that it was, at any rate for the present, impossible for him to come here. Many were the messages he sent to different friends in the city, some, alas!" continued Renée with much sympathy in her tone, "to those who within the last year have suffered persecution unto death for their adherence to the truth. He also inquired as to the progress of the school which he established for the poorer members of our community on his last visit here, but which, I am sorry to say, has for more than two years been abandoned."



"NAV, DO NOT FEEL EMBARRASSED."



"To hear your Highness say so pains me greatly," said Ochino. "The continuance of his school would indeed have been a benefit, training up, as it did, in the right way, the children of those too poor or too ignorant to guide them themselves."

"Had we been allowed to continue the school without opposition, your remark would have been perfectly true," said Judge Rosetti, who had now joined the group. "We found that the children were tracked to their homes by spies, and thus many of those who belonged to us were detected by the Inquisition. Emissaries were immediately sent to insist on the children being sent to the Romish schools. If the parents obeyed, and they consented to attend the mass themselves, by way of proving that they had not joined the Protestant faith, nothing more was said on the matter; but if not, the children were taken forcibly from them, and the parents themselves imprisoned. With such power brought against the poor and ignorant, you may easily imagine that many relapses occurred; and sorely as it went against our consciences, or rather against our wishes, we considered it more prudent to close the school."

"But," said Renée, with considerable pride in her tone and manner, "if we have been obliged to close our school for children, we have on the other hand established one for adults, which is succeeding beyond our expectation. Near the palace of the Consandolo we have a mission, which is making converts, and although they are far from being as numerous as those who leave us, still we have sufficient success to show that the wish to join us has still great strength."

"Are the Inquisitors aware of the existence of this mission?" inquired Ochino.

"Fortunately, up to the present time they have remained in utter ignorance of it," said Renée, "and I trust they may continue so till at any rate we shall have gathered sufficient strength not to dread their attacks."

"At the same time," put in the Judge, "I am in daily fear that it will come under the notice of the Inquisition. However, Providence has favoured us up to the present time, and that without our taking the slightest pains to conceal the movement."

While the Duchess conversed with great animation with the group which had gathered round her, a conversation scarcely less animated was carried on among the other guests, all touching on the difficulties and dangers which surrounded the Reformers in Ferrara. By degrees the conversation took a higher tone, and among the younger men the question began to be entertained, whether they would not be justified in the eye of the law in offering open resistance to the persecution they were suffering, some maintaining that the Inquisitors had far outstripped their powers in taking from the civil judges the jurisdiction of all ecclesiastical cases, involving the liberty and lives of the laity. In one group especially this question was argued with great vigour. Some advocated passive submission to the power of the Inquisitors

till Heaven should, in its own good time, deliver them from the hand of the persecutor; whilst others maintained that the acts of the Inquisitors being illegal, all were justified in opposing them. At last one of the speakers turned round to Camille Gurdon, and asked him in what manner his countrymen would behave if treated with similar injustice.

"I have some diffidence in answering your question," replied Camille. "I am here a stranger receiving hospitality from the authorities of Ferrara, and I hardly know whether I should be justified in so doing, as it might be considered that I was putting before you a bad example. But although I may be somewhat outstepping the bounds of discretion, I will without hesitation admit that in my own beloved country, no matter whether Protestant or Catholic, not for one week would a state of things be allowed to exist such as at this moment reigns in Ferrara. From our first union as a nation to the present time, we have always resented any arbitrary or despotic interference with our laws, and we have ever felt sympathy with those suffering under persecution."

"In what manner, then, would you advise us to act?"

"There I can give you no decided answer," said Camille.

"But as a lawyer yourself you ought to be able to advise us."

"Nay, you do me too much honour in calling me a lawyer," said Gurdon. "Here I profess myself to be only a student. Why not put your question to one more competent to answer it?" he continued, seeing Rosetti advancing towards them. "Here comes your senior Judge, and one of the most learned lawyers in Italy. Why not ask him for his opinion?"

The eyes of the whole group now turned on the Judge, and they made room for him to join them as he, with Teresa leaning on his arm, approached.

"You all look at me as if you had some question to put to me," he said. "If so, let me know what it is."

"We were debating whether in point of law we should be justified in openly resisting the Inquisition, and we appealed to Camille Gurdon for his opinion. He refuses, however, to give it us, fearing that by so doing he might be considered guilty of urging us to rebellion against the laws of Ferrara, which he would not be justified in doing, considering he is receiving hospitality from the State."

"Gurdon is quite right in declining to answer a question of the kind," replied the Judge; "for the interference of a foreigner in the affairs of another country is always looked upon with jealousy."

"But he referred us to you for an opinion," said a law student who was present.

"And I must decline giving it," said Rosetti, "beyond stating that I hold the present behaviour of the Inquisition to be utterly illegal. At the same time, between holding that opinion and advising you to open resistance there is a wide difference. Setting apart the question of legality, the imprudence of an attempt at open opposition must be apparent. Not only in Ferrara might it

bring down the power of the persecutor more terribly upon us, but it might stimulate to further action the power of the Inquisition in other cities in Italy where our Protestant brethren are less numerous than they are here, and their means of defence comparatively small. No, be assured the best power for us to look to for help in this cause is Heaven, though, I suppose," he continued, turning to Camille Gurdon, on whose handsome face a flush of honest indignation was plainly perceptible, "you sturdy Republicans think differently, and would rise against the oppressor, no matter how great the odds might be."

"Candidly, Judge Rosetti, while respecting your prudence, I must admit it is hardly the sort

of argument we are accustomed to hear in my country. There, the greater the number of the persecutors the greater and more energetic the resistance of the persecuted, their energies and courage rising in proportion to the strength of the oppressor. Pardon me if I say it, but it would have pleased me more had I heard you adopt a different style of argument. You doubtless think me presumptuous in addressing with so much candour a man of your experience and learning; but trust me. It arises from no want of respect on my part, but is due to the education and example I have had continually before my eyes from childhood upwards."

The young man spoke with so much honest indignation that a murmur of admiration arose from



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the whole group, which had now considerably augmented in numbers, others being anxious to listen to the arguments carried on. Gurdon seemed to have inspired the younger portion of his audience with no inconsiderable share of his own animation; nor was the admiration confined solely to them. The ladies of the group seemed equally pleased with his address and manner, and none among them more so than Teresa Rosetti, who gazed on him with undisguised satisfaction.

"My dear young friend," said the Judge, "believe me no one present admires your enthusiasm more than I do. But you must remember that we have a different element to contend with here from what

you have in Switzerland, and a system that will answer with you would hardly succeed with us."

"But why not first try the people before coming to that conclusion? Very possibly you may find among them far more energy than you calculate on."

"Camille," said the Judge, "you misunderstand me. I have no fear of either the courage or energy of my fellow-townsmen. Still I hold that, demoralised as we are at the present moment, it would be impolitic to attempt physically to place the civil law over the ecclesiastical. That in your own country you can quote many brilliant examples of independent thought and action among

the people is true, but scarcely any more so than history records of our citizens of Ferrara. Who sheltered the fugitive Jews of Spain and Portugal from their tormentors, and offered them an asylum and protection more boldly and resolutely than the citizens of Ferrara? When in the time of Duke Ercole the Great the Church claimed in Ferrara, as in other cities, the right of sanctuary—that of defending criminals who had rushed into ecclesiastical buildings for protection and shelter—did not we refuse to allow it even when the threat of the greater excommunication was brought against us? And seeing our determined opposition, did not the Pope himself give way? What people ever fought more resolutely against an oppressor than those of Ferrara under the late Duke Alfonso against Pope Julius II., supported as he was by half Europe? Go further back, and when the Inquisitor, even with the protection of the Marquis Azzo d'Este, stole in the night, from its tomb in the Cathedral, thirty years after his death, the body of Armano Pungilupo, whom they had declared heretic, with the intention of burning it in the Piazza, did not the people of Ferrara attack the Inquisitor and the Marquis, and publicly replace the body in the Cathedral in spite of all the force which could be brought against them? No, my friend, believe me, native energy is no more wanting among the Ferrarese than among the noble-minded Swiss themselves."

The retirement of the Duchess to her private apartments was accepted as a warning by the assembled guests that it was time to leave the palace. Nevertheless the leave-taking was so long that a considerable time elapsed before the corridor was clear. The happy evening they had spent, and the brotherly love their meeting had elicited, seemed to act like a charm which bound them together in a bond of unity it was painful to break. At last the order of their leaving was determined on, for short as the passage might be from the palace to their dwellings, it was attended with considerable danger. Some of the younger, and among them Camille Gurdon, proposed they should leave in a body, so that they might be a mutual protection to one another in case they should meet any of the city guards on their road. The graver members, however, objecting to any display of force, suggested that they should leave in small parties, so

that if they met any of the spies they might not excite suspicion. This plan was at last adopted, and the company slowly and gradually began to disperse, till none were left but Camille Gurdon and the Judge Rosetti. They remained some time longer conversing with Teresa and another lady-in-waiting, with whose services the Duchess had dispensed in order that Teresa might remain some time longer in her father's society. At last they also took their leave, Camille proposing to accompany the Judge to his home.

Rosetti and his young friend met with no impediment on their road. As they proceeded they conversed together almost in whispers, for fear of being overheard, on the events of the evening, especially on the preaching of Ochino. Camille appeared delighted with his eloquence. "I have heard," he said, "the best preachers in Geneva, including our great leader John Calvin himself, but I never heard one who approached Ochino in eloquence. No wonder the court of Rome are so anxious for his apprehension. He is a host in himself, and were he again to preach in the cathedral, and advocate the pure principles of the Reformation, he would convert all Ferrara."

"That he would do so if he could obtain the opportunity," said the Judge, "is most probable, but unfortunately such a step is not possible. Were it known that he is among us, he would immediately be arrested. Even during his lecture, and delighted as I was with it, I was unable to divest myself of the fear that among those listening to him might be some traitor that merely paid attention to his discourse for the purpose of denouncing him to-morrow."

"But surely," said Gurdon, "the Duchess would not allow him to be arrested in her palace, and while under her protection."

"That she would oppose his arrest by every means in her power is certain," said Rosetti; "but I much fear in Ochino's case her power would be but of little avail. No, we must make what provision we can for his departure, and that as quickly as possible. Call on me early to-morrow morning, and let us talk over the matter."

Gurdon promised he would do so, and having now arrived at the apartments of the Judge, the two friends separated.



CHAPTER V.—TERESA'S VISITOR.



ALTHOUGH it was still early when Camille Gurdon called on the Judge the next morning, he had already seen several of those who had attended Ochino's sermon the evening before. To the Judge's inquiries whether they had met with any impediments on their road home, Camille replied that they had

met with none whatever, but that the streets had seemed singularly quiet and deserted. One or two had encountered the guard, but on replying when challenged, they were suffered to proceed unmolested. All seemed much pleased with their meeting, and augured that a greater amount of religious freedom would be allowed them from the fact, that so many could assemble and leave without danger. So emboldened did they feel, that several of them had requested him to obtain permission from the Duchess for another prayer-meeting to be held in her palace. Camille promised that he would convey their wishes to the Judge Rosetti, and implore him, should he see no difficulty in the way, to apply to her Highness on the subject, as they considered he had great influence with her.

"I will do so willingly," replied the Judge, "although I am not certain it would be unattended with danger. At the same time a renewal of the peace and happiness we enjoyed yesterday evening is too great a temptation to be easily resisted. Still, if it be done at all, we must lose no time about it, as every day that Ochino remains in Ferrara the greater his risk. Again, it is impossible for me to wait on her Highness this morning, as it is my turn of duty at the Palace of Justice. But that difficulty may be overcome, I think. I will immediately write a letter to the Duchess, which I will get you to take, asking her again to grant the use of her chapel for our meeting, as it is the earnest wish of so many of her Protestant subjects in Ferrara. I will also say in the letter that the bearer, should her Highness require it, will give her further information on the matter."

A gleam of satisfaction was plainly visible on

Camille's face when he heard the Judge's proposition.

"But I am afraid," he said, "I shall not be able to obtain an interview with the Duchess. She might consider it an act of presumption on my part were I to ask it."

"I did not propose that you should," replied the Judge, who was now seated at the table with the writing materials before him. "I intend merely to suggest that you would be able to give her the information should she require it. Nevertheless it will give me great satisfaction if you could contrive to obtain an interview with her. Possibly," he continued, "your better way would be to ask to see my daughter, and say that you have brought a message from me. Give Teresa the letter, and request her to place it in the hands of the Duchess. After she has read it, should she make any remark as to its contents, Teresa can inform her that you are waiting for a reply, and in all probability she will request to see you. I think you will have no difficulty in the matter. You are already well known to her, and I have mentioned your name in the letter. If you do see the Duchess, do not fail to impress upon her the danger Ochino is in, and the necessity there is for taking early steps to allow him to escape. That will arouse her to renewed energy, and she will come sooner to a determination as to the assistance she intends to afford him in establishing his mission church in Zurich. There is the letter, but before you go, tell me if you have thought of any plan by which Ochino may effect his escape to Venice."

"I have reflected but little on the subject," replied Camille, "but that little encourages me to think it may be done without much difficulty or danger, that is to say, provided few only are entrusted with the secret."

"The fewer the better," said Rosetti. "Have you then thought of a plan we could adopt?"

"I have," replied Camille, "and one in which it would be difficult to have fewer confidants. I propose hiring a boat, which shall be moored on the river-bank a little below Mal-Albergo. As the current is at present strong and the river high, one other rower besides myself will be sufficient. I know a man who will suit my purpose admirably. He is a powerful, good-natured fellow, not over intelligent, and knows the river perfectly. I can easily frame some excuse to him and say I wish to row down the river a friend of mine, a Capuchin Friar (for Ochino must again wear his disguise), who is bound on a mission of mercy to some sick person near Commacchio. At daybreak when the city gates are opened, Ochino, with his cowl covering his face, and his wallet slung over his shoulder, can pass out, while I will be in waiting for him by the river-side, and once afloat, it will be difficult indeed to overtake us."

"Well, Camille," said Rosetti, "in your hands I



THE JUDGE AND CAMILLE GURDON.



leave the means for Ochino's escape from Ferrara. The plan you propose seems simple and feasible, and as far as I understand the matter, may be carried out with comparative security. At the same time, if you should consider it advisable to change it, or even make some alteration in it, let me know, and I will assist you as far as in my power. You had better now no longer delay your visit to the Palace, and it is also nearly time for me to take my seat in Court. Meet me here this evening, and let me know what has been decided on."

On arriving at the Palace, Camille Gurdon had some little difficulty in getting his message taken to Teresa Rosetti. On his explaining that he came from the Judge, her father, and that he had a letter from him to deliver, the porter asked him for it. Camille declined, however, to give it to any one but Teresa, saying that, in asking for a personal interview with her, he was only carrying out the instructions of the Judge. A messenger was now sent to the private room of the young Princesses with whom Teresa then was. On receiving the message Teresa inquired who had brought the letter, and was told it was a young well-dressed Signore, who spoke with a slight foreign accent. Teresa, from the description, easily identified the messenger as Camille, and a slight blush suffused her face, which did not escape the notice of the Princesses, or of the elderly, discreet Catholic ladies, one of whom was a nun, who were present at the time. On noticing the effect the message had produced on Teresa, a significant, momentary glance passed from the elder lady to the nun, while a good-humoured, malicious smile, almost amounting to a laugh, was indulged in by the young Princesses. Poor Teresa, finding that the eyes of her companions were fixed on her, hesitated what to do. The Princess Lucrezia, noticing her confusion, said to her—

"Nay, my dear Teresa, do not keep the foreign gentleman waiting."

"It was very kind of him to call at this dull Palace of ours on a message from your father," said the Princess Eleanora. "Pray, make him welcome, even if he is the arch-heretic Calvin himself."

"May I remind you," said the elderly lady, "that any conversation or allusion to matters of the kind are most distasteful to his Highness the Duke?"

"Oh! do not fear me, Donna Bonifazio. I do not intend to enter into any theological discussion. I have strictly obeyed his Highness on that point, have I not, Teresa, much as I love you? But once more, do not keep your foreign friend waiting, he will speak but lightly of our hospitality when he returns to Geneva if you do, for I suppose he comes from that city."

Teresa, perceiving that by going at once she would escape the jests of her friends, rose from her embroidery frame, and requested that Madonna Bonifazio would be present at her interview with the messenger, a request which was readily complied with. Leaving the room together, they passed through a corridor extending the whole

length of the building, the apartments of the Princesses being at one extremity of the Palace, the private apartments of the Duchess in the centre, and the general public reception rooms at the other end. In one of these Teresa found Camille Gurdon. Being already fully convinced who her visitor really was, she advanced without hesitation to meet him, while Madonna Bonifazio, once in his presence, discreetly remained out of ear-shot. Camille explained to her the purport of the letter he had brought from her father, and his wish that if possible he should have an interview with the Duchess.

"Give me the letter," said Teresa, "and I will immediately convey it to the Duchess. I have no doubt whatever she will grant you the interview you desire."

Camille gave her the letter, and Teresa continued, turning to Madonna Bonifazio, "This gentleman has brought with him a letter for her Highness, and wishes for an interview with her. I will myself take her the letter and bring back the reply, and if you will kindly remain here in the meantime, I have no doubt I shall be able to return in a few moments."

Madonna Bonifazio now advanced and entered into conversation with the young Swiss on subjects of common interest, taking care, although she believed him to be a Protestant, not to touch on the forbidden subject of religion. The pair conversed together for some time, the lady evidently pleased with the courteous manner and language of the young foreigner. At last they were interrupted by Teresa, who returned with a message from the Duchess, requesting to see Camille, and the three then left the room together, Teresa and Camille entering the apartments of the Duchess, while Madonna Bonifazio continued onwards till she had reached those of the Princesses. On her entrance they both rose to meet her and eagerly asked for a description of the gentleman who had called to see Teresa. Madonna Bonifazio, however, seemed but little inclined to gratify their curiosity, merely saying that he was evidently a very courteous gentleman, whom the Duchess, when she heard he had arrived, requested to see. Nor, in spite of the rigid cross-examination of the young ladies, could they obtain anything more from her; and the subject for the time dropped, though evidently without the curiosity of the Princesses being satisfied. They tacitly resolved to question Teresa when they should see her. Shortly afterwards they left the room to seek their own chambers, and the nun rose from her seat to follow them. The feminine weakness of curiosity, however, was as ripe in the bosom of the nun as in those of the young ladies, although she had asked no questions in their presence. On passing Madonna Bonifazio, she said to her, in an under tone, "Who was Teresa's visitor?"

"I do not know more of him than this," was the reply—"if he is an emissary from Calvin, and we have many such calling, the sooner Father Pelletario returns to the Palace the better."

On being introduced to the Duchess, Camille Gurdon was received by her with great condescension.

"I have read your father's letter," she said to Teresa, "and I hardly know what reply to make him. He may be perfectly certain that my chapel is at the service of our brethren should they require it, but I much doubt whether it would be prudent to have another prayer-meeting so soon. Have you heard," she continued, turning to Camille Gurdon, "whether those who attended here yesterday evening received any annoyance on their road home?"

"I have seen several," was the reply, "and in no case did any of them receive the slightest molestation."

"I am most happy to hear it," said the Duchess. "However, I will speak to our Reverend Pastor Ochino, and ask his advice. All things considered, I think it would be better to delay for a day or two."

"But pardon me, your Highness," said Camille, "I understood that his stay in Ferrara was to be very short."

"The longer he remains with us the better," said Renée, "so that he can do it in safety. While he keeps in the palace there will be no danger of his being recognised, as none of the Catholic ladies of my court saw him when he was last in Ferrara."

"But is he not in danger of being recognised by the Father Pelletario?" remarked Camille. "Formerly, I understand, they were very intimate."

"The Father Pelletario is at present with the Duke my husband at Belriguardo," was Renée's reply, "and it is uncertain when he will return to the city. You have not heard the subject spoken of, Teresa, have you?"

"I heard Madonna Bonifazio say the other day that she had received a message from the Father Pelletario, stating that most probably he should remain at Belriguardo till the Duke's return to the city, and that they would arrive together."

"I do not expect his Highness will return for some days," said Renée, "therefore we need be in no hurry for a day or two. I will talk the matter of the next prayer-meeting over with our Pastor, and let you know his reply. But now," she continued, addressing herself to Camille, "did I rightly understand you were a native of Geneva?"

"I am, your Highness."

"Are you acquainted with our great leader John Calvin?"

"I have spoken to him but once or twice," said Gurdon, "though I know many of his intimate associates, and have heard him speak frequently."

"Are you acquainted with any one residing in the same house with him?"

"Yes, more than one."

"Might I trust you, then," said Renée, "to convey to him a letter from me? I received one from that good man a few days since, in which he complains that I do not write to him, and he trusts I am not getting lukewarm in the faith. Now I have written to him several times lately, and he

evidently has not received my letters. Might I trust in you?"

"You may, your Highness," said Camille, "as implicitly as in yourself. Confide to me your letter, and my death alone shall prevent his receiving it."

"Call on me this evening, then," said Renée, "and the letter shall be ready for you. If you succeed in transmitting it to him, you will do me a great favour. But now tell me, has any plan been suggested for our Reverend Pastor Ochino to leave Ferrara in safety?"

"I have conceived a plan by which I think he may do so without difficulty or danger," said Camille, "and one in which I have not to fear the indiscretion or treachery of any one;" and he then narrated to the Duchess the plan he proposed adopting, on which he was much complimented by her Highness.

The interview continued but a short time longer, when the Duchess permitted Camille Gurdon to depart, requesting him to call in the evening for the letter she wished to forward to the great Reformer in Geneva. On leaving the room Teresa conducted Camille as far as the ante-chamber. Before quitting her, he said—

"Do you think I shall have any difficulty this evening in being admitted into the presence of the Duchess?"

"None whatever," said Teresa. "You may rest assured every facility will be shown you."

"Still," said Camille, "I should hardly like to be conducted to her Highness by any one in whom I could not positively confide. The commission she has given me is a somewhat difficult one, and the fewer entrusted with the secret the better. Would you object to be present at the time? You have already heard her mention her wish, and it would be advisable that no one else should know it. Now do oblige me."

"If you wish it I will be present," said Teresa, slightly colouring. "But now I must leave you to attend on the Duchess, so good-bye till evening."

Teresa then left him, and returned to the room she had just quitted.

CHAPTER VI.—A DANGEROUS COMMISSION.

In the afternoon of the same day, after the duties of Judge Rosetti at the Palace of Justice were over, Camille Gurdon related to him the interview he had had in the morning with Renée, saying how she was unable at the moment to give any decided answer as to allowing another prayer-meeting to be held in the chapel till she had spoken to Ochino on the subject. He further informed Rosetti that the Jesuit Father was then absent, and not expected to arrive in Ferrara till the Duke himself returned, and that no other person in the palace would be able to recognise him.

"So far that is fortunate," said the Judge, "and it relieves my mind from a considerable amount of anxiety. Her Highness did not state when she would be able to give an answer respecting the chapel?"

"She did not," said Gurdon, "but requested me to call on her again this evening, when very possibly I shall have her reply. Her Highness also spoke on another subject, which doubtless she would have no objection to speak of to you; but, as I have not yet received her authority, you will pardon me if I do not mention it. I have no doubt this evening she will authorise me to confide it to you."

"You are quite right, Camille," said the Judge, "not to divulge her secret till you have her authority for doing so. But I trust you will be on the alert as to any rumours respecting Ochino's presence in Ferrara, and have the boat in readiness, that he may be able, in case of danger, to depart at an hour's notice."

Although the apartments of the Princesses were separate from those occupied by the Duchess, the most perfect freedom of access existed between them. Renée, as before stated, was tenderly attached to her daughters, and the love they bore their mother was that of devoted and affectionate children. Yet a singular feature existed in their family love. Tenderly attached as they were, and happy in each other's society, that great bond of family love—unity of religious opinions—was utterly wanting. It was their custom to meet together in the apartments of the Duchess each afternoon. Religion was to them all a proscribed subject, under penalty of the absolute separation of the mother from her daughters, so that while the warmest display of family love was developed in their meetings, each had to put a guard on her tongue lest the subject held dear—religion—might come to the lips. And this must have been the more painful to them, as the Princesses were as ardently Roman Catholic as their mother was Protestant. In their afternoon meetings, on all subjects than the one most esteemed by them, the most unrestrained freedom prevailed. The somewhat taciturn habits of Renée would then relax, and she would enter, with the most perfect effusion of heart, into the details of her daughters' conversation,—into descriptions of their amusements, and consultations on dress—a subject which Renée, Frenchwoman as she was, always appeared to hold but in slight estimation—and join in the innocent gossiping of her children with an eagerness which formed a singular contrast to her ordinary staid and somewhat reserved manner. In these afternoon re-unions the gaiety of heart developed in Renée and her daughters seemed also to communicate itself to the attendants, Madonna Bonifazio, who accompanied the Princesses (neither Sister Laura, the nun, nor Father Pelletario, the Jesuit confessor, being ever admitted into Renée's presence), and Donna Ponte, an elderly Protestant Swiss from one of the Italian cantons; and they would converse together with the Duchess and her children with perfect friendship and good feeling.

On the afternoon in question, a slight difference was observable in the manner in which the conversation was carried on. The Duchess, instead of as usual occupying herself with her daughters, con-

versed principally with the two elderly ladies. This was probably due to the conduct of the two Princesses, who had contrived to draw Teresa into a corner of the room, overwhelming her with questions, half serious, half jesting, on the handsome foreigner who had called in the morning. All these Teresa, possibly not displeased at the insinuations of her companions that the real object of the young foreigner's visit was herself and not their mother, parried as she best could; nor did she escape from her tormentors till a short time before the meeting broke up, when the Duchess called her daughters to her, and after conversing with them for some time on ordinary topics, dismissed them and retired to her own room, taking Teresa with her.

"I do not feel very well this evening," she said to Teresa, "my head aches, and my eyes smart. I have probably over-fatigued them by writing this long letter. I am not sure whether I shall be well enough to give an audience to your father's friend when he calls this evening, but I fear not. In that case you had better see him yourself, Teresa. If you do, pray impress upon him the necessity of using great caution, so that the letter may not miscarry."

"If your Highness orders it, of course it is not for me to disobey," said Teresa, "but at the same time——" and here she stopped short, as if afraid to conclude the sentence.

"I think I understand you, Teresa," said Renée. "You doubt the propriety of your seeing him alone, and I compliment you on it. But I had no intention of proposing it to you. You can have one of the ladies-in-waiting with you, so that no misconception can be placed on your interview."

"But in that case," said Teresa, "your secret would be confided to another."

"Hardly so," said the Duchess. "Take with you Donna Ponte; you can speak French fluently, and she does not understand a word of the language. Converse then in French, and she will be ignorant of the object of your interview."

"Should she inquire," said Teresa, "what answer shall I make her?"

"Refer her to me, that is all you have to do. Now, do not fail to impress upon the youth the absolute necessity there is that he should conduct himself with great discretion in the matter, and that as much for his own safety—or more so perhaps—than mine; as, should he be discovered, but little mercy would await him at the hands of the Inquisitor."

"There is no necessity for me to dwell on the last reason," said Teresa, somewhat warmly. "My father's friend, Camille Gurdon, requires no better stimulus for energy and secrecy than the wish to obey your Highness, and the success of our cause."

"Well," said Renée, smiling at the earnestness of the girl's manner, "if I have done him an injustice I regret it. Since, then, I have so devoted a servant, tell him I rely implicitly on his discretion; that I feel persuaded he will carry out his commission with tact and energy. Tell him, if he succeeds

I will give him a reward that shall prove to him my gratitude for the service he has done me. Now take the letter, Teresa, and meet him when he comes, for I feel I shall not be able to see him myself."

Teresa took the letter, and retired to her own room; and when there, attempted to think over, with a cool brain, the events of the day, and especially her conversation with the Duchess and her daughters in the afternoon. Although her conversation with the Princesses was in reality carried on more in jest than earnest, it had left a somewhat deeper impression on the mind of the young girl than she herself perhaps would willingly have allowed. Again, it must be admitted that she had already conceived a considerable amount of admiration for the handsome and talented young Swiss. But although she had met him often, little conversation had ever passed between them, either her father or some female friend having invariably been present. Teresa's regard for the young fellow, however, had already reached that point when simple admiration is about to ripen into a warmer feeling, which her conversation with the Princesses that afternoon had tended considerably to develop. Again, there was another point which caused her much consideration. What could be the reward which the Duchess intended to present to Camille should he succeed in the commission he had undertaken? There was a mystery about it she could not unravel. Could she have meant by it that Camille Gurdon—

Before the thought had been perfectly formed Teresa had already regretted it, and felt angry with herself for having begun to entertain it. But in spite of her reasoning she could not divest herself of the impression that the Duchess had uttered the words with peculiar significance in her tone and manner. Then again Teresa rejected the idea, and then again it recurred to her, and thus alternately doubting and resolving the time passed till evening had closed in; and then she began to collect her wits for the interview with Camille, postponing for future consideration the question whether the Duchess intended to present the young Swiss with her hand in case he should successfully carry out the commission intrusted to him.

Teresa now went to the apartments of Donna Ponte, to request her presence at the interview with Camille Gurdon. For some time Donna Ponte objected, as she did not consider it prudent on the part of Teresa to hold an interview with so young a man, and it was only after Teresa had shown her the letter of the Duchess (taking good care not to let her see the superscription), and assuring her that it was by desire of the Duchess she was to meet Camille, and that her Highness had wished her (Donna Ponte) to be present, that she consented, and they descended together into the large hall where members of the household were accustomed to meet strangers who called on them. On their way thither a servant met them, who informed them that the foreign gentleman who had called in

the morning had arrived, and wished to be presented to the Duchess; but as her Highness was indisposed that evening, he had come for instructions on the subject. He received for answer that the stranger was to be shown into the hall, and shortly afterward Teresa and her companion entered, and found Camille awaiting them. Teresa immediately advanced to meet him.

"Her Highness," she said in French, "has requested me to see you, as it is not convenient at present for her to receive you. She told me to give you this letter, and impress on you the necessity of using great caution in forwarding it to its destination. I suppose I may inform her that you will willingly do so?"

"Most willingly," said Camille. "Tell her she may rest positively certain it shall be forwarded. And is there no commission I can execute for you?"

"None," said Teresa, somewhat surprised at the question, "beyond carrying out faithfully the wishes of her Highness."

"As I said before, that shall faithfully be done. It would increase the pleasure, however, if I had a commission also to execute for you."

"I have none," said Teresa, with something like agitation in her voice, "except requesting you to give my love to my dear father."

Camille remained silent for a few moments, and then said to her in a still lower tone of voice,—

"Oh! how I wish I could have but a few moments' conversation with you alone!"

"For what purpose?" said Teresa, assuming an air of surprise.

"I cannot tell you," he said, looking towards Donna Ponte, who, finding they were speaking French, had retired with something of ill-humour to some distance, so far, in fact, that she could scarcely be seen, for although the hall was lighted up by a brazen lamp in the centre, its rays were hardly sufficient to illumine the whole of the large saloon. Teresa was silent for a moment, and then said, with considerable hesitation in her voice,—

"You can speak if you wish. My companion understands no French."

"Even if that were the case," replied Camille, "I have hardly the courage to address you on the subject I wish. It is on the admiration I have for you, which began from the first moment I saw you, and which has gone on increasing since. In pity's sake tell me what I am to do."

"I can listen to no conversation of the kind," said Teresa, "without first receiving permission from my father and her Highness."

"Will you allow me, then, to speak to your father?" said Camille, breathless with anxiety.

"I have no right to forbid you," said Teresa, puzzled what answer to make; "you can if you please." And then assuming more courage, she continued, "But I cannot allow you to speak more with me now, nor will I have any more conversation with you on the subject until you have spoken to my father."

"Answer me but one question," said Camille, "and I will obey you. May I tell your father you gave me permission to speak to him?"

"No, certainly not," said Teresa; "you must take it on your own responsibility."

"May I hope," asked Camille, "that you wish me success in my interview with your father?"

"I will not say another word on the subject," said Teresa, "and if you will not go, I must leave you, and that will appear uncourteous."

"I must obey you, then," said Camille. And taking her hand and kissing it respectfully, he left the room.

As soon as he had quitted them, Donna Ponte said in a tone of ill-humour to Teresa, "I hardly think it was particularly civil to me, or proper bearing in a young girl, to converse with that stranger in French, knowing, as you did, that I do not understand the language. In my time young girls behaved very differently. Not a word ever passed between them and a young man without some staid elderly lady being present at the time."

"I told you," said Teresa, "that it was the express wish of the Duchess that you should be present at this interview, nor would I have received the stranger unless you had been there. What you say about my incivility in speaking French arose from no fault of mine. I had the direct instructions of her Highness on the matter."

Donna Ponte made a gesture of doubt of so marked a description, that Teresa could not fail to notice it.

"I told you the truth," she said, angrily, "and to-morrow, in the presence of the Duchess, I will get her to confirm what I say. At the same time I don't like to be treated with incivility or doubt by you. That you are my senior, I admit, but not my superior."

Teresa, finding that Donna Ponte was on the point of making an angry reply, left her and walked rapidly to her own room, nor did she leave it again that evening.

CHAPTER VII.—ORIZ.

ON the morning after the Duchess Renée had despatched her letter to Calvin, a stranger in the dress of a Dominican monk, attended by two servants and three baggage mules, arrived at the convent of the Corpus Domini, and requested to see the Superior, Father Fabrizio. The lay-brother who received the stranger informed him that the Reverend Father was at that time much occupied in his private room, and had given orders that no one should disturb him.

"He will make an exception in my case," said the Dominican. "Pray take my message to him, and then see that my servants and mules are properly accommodated."

The lay-brother for a moment hesitated what to do, as the instructions he had received from his Superior were imperative, and Father Fabrizio, who at that time acted as the chief Inquisitor in Ferrara, was not a man likely to allow his orders to be

broken with impunity. Still there was a calm self possession in the stranger which puzzled the lay-brother very much. Although he spoke in a quiet and almost subdued tone, he seemed to possess great determination of purpose, and his manner, though quiet and courteous, was still of a description which showed he not only was accustomed to command, but to be obeyed.

"Might I ask your name, Reverend Father?" said the lay-brother. "I fear unless I take it to Father Fabrizio there is but little chance of his seeing you, but far greater probability of my displeasing him."

"There will be no occasion to tell him my name," said the monk, "he has been expecting me for some time. Say to him that I only arrived this morning from Paris."

The lay-brother then left the room, and shortly afterwards returned with the Superior of the convent, who received the stranger with every mark of profound respect. He then invited him to accompany him to a private room which had been prepared for him, much to the surprise of the lay-brother, who looked upon the Superior of his convent with great reverence, and he was naturally somewhat puzzled to know who the individual could be who was received with so much respect, justly concluding that he must be a man of the highest importance. Nor was he mistaken in his conclusion. The stranger was none other than the celebrated Oriz, than whom, though his title was no higher than that of a Doctor in theology, few of the College of Cardinals possessed greater power. This man had been appointed by Henry II. of France, his "Inquisitor of the Faith." When first he commenced his duties he exercised them for some time with considerable moderation. Tradition says of him, that he was then of a rather jovial, good-natured disposition. If true, all traces of it were completely lost at the time of our narrative. It is even recorded of him* that in the year 1534, when he was sent as Inquisitor to Sancerre to search for heretics, the inhabitants, aware of his fondness for good cheer, treated him with so much hospitality, that although Protestantism had really taken great hold in the neighbourhood, he reported them to the *Lieutenant Criminel* as a very good sort of people. He was then, as Dr. M'Crie says, but young, and had not yet tasted blood.† Afterwards spurred on by the Court of Rome, he carried on his labours with so much rigour, that he became at last one of the most cruel persecutors of the Protestants that ever disgraced the Romish Church in France. To such an extent did he carry his spirit of persecution, that although named by his Majesty Henry II. as Grand Inquisitor of France, the French papists were disgusted at his conduct, and insisted on his quitting the kingdom. For some time the King refused to listen to his people, but at last finding the discontent at the presence of

* Bize, "Hist. des Eglises Ref. de France."

† "Reformation in Italy."

the Inquisitor becoming prevalent in all classes of society, his Majesty determined to send Oriz on a mission to Ferrara for the double purpose of bringing the Duchess Renée back to the Romish faith, and by his superior energy and inflexible cruelty, to exterminate heresy in the strongest hold it had hitherto obtained in Italy.

As soon as they were alone, the Superior, in the same tone of marked respect which he had shown on first meeting the stranger, said—

"I hardly expected you so soon, Reverend Father. You must excuse me if I was not prepared to receive you."

"Make no apologies," said Oriz. "I have arrived two days earlier than I taught you to expect from the letter I forwarded to you; but understanding that my presence was much needed in Ferrara, I have made greater haste than I otherwise should have done."

"That your presence is much needed in Ferrara is perfectly true. It gives me also much pleasure to be able to resign the direction of our Holy Office into hands far more experienced than my own. But before we touch on that subject," the Superior continued, "allow me to order some refreshment, as you must doubtless be fatigued with your journey."

"Not at all," said Oriz. "I reached Mal-Albergo yesterday evening, where I remained for the night, and crossed the river this morning. The letter I received from you in Milan, tells me that for some time past little progress has been made in Ferrara in exterminating the pestilential heresy which afflicts it: is that the case?"

"It is," said the Superior. "And yet this has arisen from no want of zeal on my part or the part of those connected with me."

"From what cause does it arise then?" inquired Oriz.

"From the power her Highness still exercises over the Duke. Again, you must not imagine the inaction which has lately been observed has been without other cause. Having received intelligence of your expected arrival, I thought it better to let things remain in abeyance till I saw you, contenting myself with seeing that heresy made no head. My principal reason for this inaction was, that her Highness is still indisposed to attend mass, and exerts herself for the protection of the heretics, I purposed to allow her to carry out her designs with comparative impunity, judging that by the time of your arrival we should be better able to point out to you those who are the principal supporters of the errors of Calvinism in our city, and thus place in your hands information which it would have been difficult to obtain had we carried on our efforts with the same unflinching severity we did some months since."

"And have you succeeded?"

"I may say we have, and to an extent we had hardly calculated on. We have discovered, and in fact intercepted, many letters written from her Highness to the arch-heretic Calvin, and thereby we have become acquainted with many names of

individuals tainted with heresy which we should not otherwise have known."

"Have you placed these intercepted letters before his Highness?" inquired Oriz.

"I have not," said the Superior. "I thought it better to wait your arrival; the more so as I will candidly admit that the Duke, although a true son of the Church in all spiritual matters, and of a fidelity not to be suspected, receives with considerable coolness, if not anger, any complaints of the conduct of the Duchess. But you, with your superior authority, will, I trust, be able to remove that impediment. But I have some most pleasing intelligence to give you. The renegade Capuchin, Bernardino Ochino, is at this moment in Ferrara."

"Has he been arrested?" asked Oriz.

"He has not."

"And why not?"

"Because," said the Superior, "he is residing in the Palace of San Francesco, under the protection of the Duchess; but we have him there as securely as if he were at this moment locked up and in chains in one of our own dungeons. Our agents watch the Palace night and day. Not an individual can enter or leave it without our knowledge, although no one residing in the Palace or those entering it imagine they are watched. So complete is the system adopted, that it would be impossible for a child even to leave it without our being informed."

"Have you the names of those who attended the prayer-meeting there the other evening?" said Oriz.

"I have," said the Superior, evidently much surprised that Oriz was aware of the prayer-meeting having taken place. Possibly Oriz noticed the expression of surprise on the countenance of the Superior, but he made no remark.

"And you are certain you may depend upon the fidelity of those of your agents employed within the Palace?"

"I am as certain of their fidelity as I am of my own, and all, of any ability, have been removed from the suite of the Duchess. Those who now remain with her are principally aged women, whose intellects are none of the brightest, with the exception of a young girl, the daughter of Biagio Rosetti, the senior Judge, who is also tainted with heresy, and who, like her father, might be convicted of the crime to-morrow should proceedings be taken out against her. We have even gone so far as to obtain the removal of the tutor of the young Princesses, the celebrated Francesco Porta Da Creta, from merely the suspicion that he had imbibed heretical notions, and have obtained the appointment for the Jesuit, Father Pelletario."

"Why is that young girl allowed to remain?" asked Oriz.

"Partly because we did not wish to have the appearance of none but aged or infirm women being in attendance on the Duchess, who, I may mention, has resolutely refused to allow any one who attends mass, or the confessional, to be about her person,

and partly because the two princesses have conceived a strong affection for the girl. I trust you see no objection to the arrangement?"

"None whatever," said Oriz. "If the two Princesses are well instructed in their religious duties, as I have no doubt they are, there will be little danger to their souls, while we may hope—in time at least—that their double interest may act on the mind of the heretic girl. But now tell me if the Duke and Father Pelletario have returned to Ferrara?"

"Not that I know of," said the Superior; "but I hardly think it probable."

"So far to the contrary," said Oriz, "that it is more than probable they are at this moment arrived. When I reached Mal-Albergo yesterday evening, and found that the Duke was at Belriguardo, my first care was immediately to despatch a messenger to him, humbly requesting that he would grant me an interview, and that on the receipt of his answer I should make preparations to wait on him without delay."

"I should think then," said the Superior, "that his Highness will await your arrival at Belriguardo."

"I hardly agree with you," said Oriz coolly. "I think it more probable that his Highness will have left Belriguardo this morning to join me in Ferrara, and the distance is not so far but that he may have already arrived. You will greatly oblige me by sending a messenger to the Este Palace to know whether it is the case."

The Superior now left the room and despatched a messenger to the Este Palace to inquire if the Duke had arrived from Belriguardo, but before he had returned with an answer, an officer of the Duke reached the convent with a message that his Highness impatiently awaited in the Este Palace an interview with the Reverend Father Oriz.

Oriz, with the alacrity which usually distinguished him in all matters he had undertaken, delayed not a moment, but returned with the messenger. On entering the audience room in the Este Palace, he found the Duke in conversation with the Father Pelletario, who had also returned to Ferrara with him. The reception which Duke Ercole gave to the Inquisitor was one of mingled friendship and respect, which Oriz on his part received in his usual quiet and subdued manner, without the slightest appearance of gratitude or pleasure at the welcome the Duke had given him. The only semblance of marked expression on his countenance was when the Duke introduced him to the Father Pelletario. Then for a moment he cast on the Jesuit a glance so piercing, that he seemed as if determined to read the confessor's inmost thoughts. The glance Pelletario cast on Oriz was scarcely less characteristic. While bowing with profound respect and humility, and with a smile of pleasure at the introduction, the keen eye of the Jesuit fell on that of the Inquisitor, telling him that he was as perfectly able to defend himself as the Inquisitor to attack, and that he feared nothing whatever from his presence.

"You told me in your letter, which I received late last night," said the Duke, "that you were the bearer of a mission of great importance from the King of France. Let me ask you whether it is one of such secrecy that the Reverend Father Pelletario cannot be present at our interview?"

"It would give me great joy could I have the Reverend Father's advice and support for the subject I am about to introduce to your Highness. At the same time, as my message is to you alone, I hardly know whether I should be justified in the respect I owe to his Majesty, in allowing a third person, without his permission, to be present at our interview. I am, however, fully persuaded that had his Majesty been aware that that person was the father confessor to your Highness, he would not have made the slightest objection."

The Jesuit Father, on hearing the answer Oriz made to the Duke, immediately acquiesced in the propriety of there being no third person present at the interview, and, bowing respectfully to the Duke and the Inquisitor, left the apartment.

As soon as they were alone Oriz said, "I sincerely trust your Highness will pardon me for having undertaken the painful mission with which I have been intrusted. I beg to assure your Highness I would willingly have avoided it, but his Majesty the King insisted so strenuously on my undertaking it, that I had no alternative. First, then, let me place in your hands an autograph letter his Majesty has sent you, and which you will find corroborates all I say to you."

The Duke opened the letter, and glanced rapidly over it.

"I see," said the Duke, addressing Oriz, "that in this letter his Majesty tells me that at his earnest desire you have taken this journey to Ferrara, to speak to me on spiritual things concerning our state, and especially regarding our illustrious Duchess, the Princess Renée. I will presently read the letter again, and in the meantime will you give me your message?"

"Allow me, your Highness," said Oriz, drawing a paper from his pocket, "to refer you to this document, which has been drawn up by the express order of his Majesty. In it I am requested to implore your Highness with the utmost earnestness to allow me an interview with the illustrious Princess, the Duchess Renée, in the hope that I may be able to extricate her from the labyrinth of those unhappy opinions in which she is lost, so contrary and repugnant to our holy faith and religion, and the news of which has caused deep sorrow to his Majesty the King of France. At this interview I am also instructed to impress upon her the great favours God has granted her, and amongst others, that of being the issue of the present blood of the most Christian house of France, where no monster has ever existed; and also to explain that, should she remain in her stubbornness and pertinacity, it would displease the King as much as anything in the world, and would cause him entirely to forget the love he, as her nephew, bears her, he hating nothing with a greater

hate than all those of the reprobate sects, whose mortal enemy he is."

"That you will have my full permission for the interview with the Duchess you may be perfectly assured, but at the same time, Dr. Matteo Oriz, you must not hold me answerable if she refuse to receive you. Excellent as a wife, admirable as a mother and in all other respects, her Highness is inflexible on any subject connected with her religion; and I profoundly regret to say that the hatred the most Christian King bears the reprobate sects, is not greater than that in which her Highness holds many of the most eminent men of our holy religion, especially those who are members of the

monastic orders. Should her Highness, therefore, object to receive you, do not consider me in any way guilty in the matter."

"It would be gross presumption on the part of so humble an individual as myself to judge your Highness in this matter," said Dr. Oriz; "nor should I venture to ask you to allow me to make a remark on it were I not commanded to do so by his Majesty, who takes the greatest interest in the soul of his dear aunt, the Duchess Renée."

"Make any remarks you please; I will willingly hear them," said the Duke.

"His Majesty goes on to say," continued Dr. Oriz, "that if after such remonstrance and per-



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suation as I shall be able to make to her, so that she may know the truth, and the difference there is between light and darkness, she still remains unconverted, stronger means should be employed."

"I do not understand you," said the Duke, with something of surprise in his tone, not unmingled with severity.

"That I am instructed by his Majesty," said Oriz, disregarding the Duke's tone of displeasure, "that in case I should be unable by the gentle means I shall use to gain her, and reclaim the Duchess, I am—. But pardon me if I here read my instructions verbally, that your Highness may not think I exceed them." Then reading, he continued—"He shall take counsel with the said Lord Duke as to

what can possibly be done in the way of rigour and severity to bring her to reason."

"The language is somewhat of the strongest," said Ercole sternly; "and I am rather surprised to find that the King of France should write in such a manner respecting an illustrious Princess of his own house."

"His Majesty goes still further," said Dr. Oriz, continuing in the same respectful impassive tone; "he says that in case rigour or severity fail to bring her to reason, then his Majesty wills and approves, and indeed exhorts your Highness very earnestly, that you would cause the Princess Renée to be put into a place secluded from society and conversation, taking away her children, and the

whole of her family and court, entirely irrespective of whatever nation they may be. But," continued Oriz, "the instructions of his Majesty to me go still further with respect to the punishment to be inflicted on the noble lady should she continue in the errors of her ways. As, however, the subject seems painful to your Highness, I will not allude further to it than to say, that his Majesty trusts your Highness will punish with unflinching severity, even to the death, all those who shall have assisted or abetted her Highness, as well as take all possible means of clearing from your dominions the heretics which at present infest them."

For some moments the Duke remained silent and thoughtful, as if undecided what answer he would give to the chief Inquisitor. Ercole had a difficult task before him. He was conscientiously grieved at what he considered the erroneous religious opinions entertained by the Duchess. For political reasons he was most anxious to continue in good favour with the Court of France. But above all it was his chief interest at that moment to keep on good terms with the Court of Rome, in order to secure the succession of the Duchy to his own children, instead of allowing it to revert—as it probably would after the death of his successor—into the States of the Church. Still, the natural proud feelings of a Prince of the house of Este revolted at the idea of any foreign powers, even those as influential as the King of the French, or the Pope of Rome, interfering with the domestic affairs of his principality. And this feeling was further increased by the natural sentiment of manhood which prompted him to stand forward and

defend his wife from the powerful conspiracy which he could easily perceive had been formed against her, much as he objected to the principles of the religion she had adopted. The Inquisitor, who stood motionless, with his eyes fixed on the ground, perfectly understood the agitation at that moment swaying the mind of the Duke, but rightly judging that in the end his Highness would agree to the request of the King of France, he said nothing.

"Dr. Matteo Oriz," said the Duke, suddenly, "I submit to the request of his Majesty the King of France, and you have my full permission to request an interview with the Duchess. With respect to the stronger portions of your instructions we will talk more afterwards. At present my permission is limited solely to an interview with the Duchess, although I think you will have some difficulty in obtaining it."

"If your Highness would advise the Duchess that a messenger has arrived from her nephew the King of France, who desires to speak with her, and that it is your especial wish the interview should be granted, I am fully persuaded she will then no longer hesitate."

"Probably you may be right," said the Duke, after a moment's consideration. "I will do so. But remember, Reverend Father, should you be displeased with your interview, no disrespect shall be shown the Duchess, nor shall any steps be taken against her or any person of her household without my especial authority."

"Your Highness may be fully persuaded I will carry out your orders," said Oriz.



CHAPTER VIII.—AN AUDIENCE.



IN the afternoon of the same day Oriz proceeded to the Palace of San Francisco, and had his audience with the Duchess. When he arrived at the Palace he was conducted to her private room in which she was accustomed to hold her confidential audiences. When he entered he found her Highness at-

tended by two ladies, one of whom was Donna Ponte, already alluded to, and the other Teresa Rosetti. 'Till the Inquisitor was ushered into the presence, Renée had no idea that the messenger for whom her husband had demanded an interview was a monk. A slight flush of displeasure crossed her face when she saw him, but the moment after she controlled it. On advancing gravely to within a few yards of the chair on which the Duchess was seated, Oriz waited for her to address him.

"His Highness the Duke has this morning sent me a message," said Renée, "that you have arrived from the Court of my nephew the King of France, and that you were intrusted with a special message for me. Did I correctly understand him?"

"You did, your Highness," said Oriz. "I am entrusted with a message from your Royal nephew; but as it concerns yourself alone, might I respectfully submit that no others should be present?"

"Before I answer you," said Renée, "tell me whether your mission treats on political, family, or spiritual subjects, for from your dress I suspect it must be the latter."

"Your Highness has arrived at a right conclusion," said the monk. "My mission, beyond some strong sentences of affection on the part of your Royal nephew, relates only to the welfare of your soul."

"Then, sir," said Renée sternly, "know that, as I have long since rejected both the mass and the confession, I now refuse to grant you, a monk, a private interview on any subject of the kind. These ladies have my fullest confidence, and you may, if you please, speak with the most unreserved candour. On any spiritual matter I have nothing to hide from them."

"I much regret the decision your Highness has come to," said Oriz. "May I hope you will reconsider it?"

"Certainly not, sir," said Renée. "Proceed with your message or quit the room. I will not be dictated to by any one, priest or noble."

"I will obey your Highness," said Oriz. "At the same time pardon me if I say that you place me in a very painful position. It would be painful to me under any circumstances, but in the presence of others it will be doubly so."

"Proceed, sir," said Renée somewhat impatiently.

"My message from his Majesty, then," said Oriz, "is shortly as follows: that he has heard with profound sorrow that you have refused to attend the mass, and abstained from the confessional—that you have set at nought the different rites and ceremonies of our Church, such as eating meat on prohibited days, and setting bad examples to those around you, besides other grave faults. He sincerely hopes that you will kindly listen to the arguments I shall bring forward to show you that you are in error."

"Proceed with them, sir," said Renée.

"Your Highness must perceive that it will be inconvenient at the present moment to attack the errors into which you have fallen; and to prove their falseness at a single interview would be difficult to me and fatiguing to your Highness. I trust that on another occasion you will allow me to go systematically into the subject."

"Why not proceed with them at once?" said Renée. "At any rate make your beginning."

"Still I must crave the indulgence of your Highness to grant me another opportunity."

"And if I refuse?" said Renée.

"My instructions with your Highness go no further," said Oriz. "All the rest relates to the Duke himself."

"And might I ask you," said Renée, "what those instructions are, or are they to be kept a secret from me, his wife?"

"Unfortunately," said Oriz, "they are not to be kept a secret from your Highness. On the contrary, they are to be most explicitly told to you. At the same time, I would prefer the Duke, your husband, explaining them to you."

"The Duke, my husband, explain them to me!" said Renée angrily, grasping the arm of her chair. "And why can you not explain them to me yourself? Do not stand on any punctilio. I have received offence from those wearing your habit so often, that I am now able to bear any fresh one with composure. Say, sir, what it is you mean, for I perceive it is already on the tip of your tongue."

"If I must obey your Highness," said Oriz, "my instructions go to the extent of requesting the Duke to place such restraint on you as shall preclude the possibility of your doing injury to the

souls of others ; and not to grant you your liberty again till you have consented to attend the mass and the confessional."

"In other words, sir, I suppose I am to be deprived of the society of those around me. You Inquisitors—for I can easily perceive you are one—appear determined to leave standing no opponent whom you can overthrow. One would have imagined the bodyguard I have, two of whom you see standing by my chair,"—pointing to Donna Ponte and Teresa—"were not of such a dangerous kind as to excite your apprehension. But tell me, suppose that even then I refused to hear you, what would be the result?"

"Pardon me, your Highness, if I do not answer that question."

"Nay, speak, man ; why hesitate ? Tell the whole truth. I repeat again, if I refuse to attend the mass and the confessional, what then ?"

"Once more I trust your Highness will excuse me," said Oriz.

"What, ashamed of your mission?" said Renée, sarcastically, "and you an Inquisitor!"

"I am not ashamed of my mission," said Oriz, now drawing himself up, and showing for the first time during their interview that his countenance was capable of another than the placid, resigned look it had hitherto worn. "I am not ashamed of my mission ; I glory in it. Know then the advice of his Majesty the King of France to the illustrious Duke, your husband is, that should you continue still in your errors and impenitent, to apply those means for your conversion which have succeeded so well with thousands of others."

"And what may they be?" said Renée.

"The torture," replied Oriz emphatically.

"The torture!" said Renée, rising from her seat, with an intense expression of indignation on her countenance. "The torture! And that word applied to me, a Princess of France!" Then, advancing towards Oriz, she said, "It is false ; my nephew never intrusted you with such a commission ; he dare not do it. The whole manhood of the French nation would rise up with indignation were it known that he suggested a thing of the kind. And you would advise my husband, the Duke, to apply the torture to me, his wife? Do you think for one moment that he would entertain the suggestion, attached though he is to the Church of Rome? Have not those of your creed already had good proof of the temper of the Princes of the House of Este when unjust interference was attempted to be used in the affairs of their dominions? Ah! that I wore a beard, and that you were not a priest," said Renée, "licensed to insult a woman without danger. I would then show you what would be the result of offering Renée of France an insult of the kind. Try the experiment on my husband, the Duke, if you please. But no, though you would insult his wife, you would not have the courage to propose it to him."

"Not only have I the courage to propose it to

him," said Oriz, who had now completely resumed his ordinary tranquil tone, "but I hold it to be an especial portion of my duty, not only to your nephew, but to that great cause whose humble instrument I am, to impress its necessity on the Duke ; and that the torture be continued till your Highness has attended mass, confessed, and done penance for your offences."

For some moments Renée continued to gaze on the monk with intense indignation. Her anger, however, seemed not to have the slightest effect on Oriz, who stood before her cold and impassive as a statue.

"Once more, before I leave," he said to her, "let me implore your Highness to consent to listen to my arguments ; for it will pain me greatly to inform the Duke, your husband, of your disobedience to his wishes."

Renée looked calmly at him for a moment, and then said—

"Not only do I refuse to hear you, but I insist that our interview now cease, and that you never seek to enter my presence again ; for no matter on whose part you come, I will not receive you. Of what service can any argument on your part be when the opinions of both of us are irrevocably fixed on articles of faith as wide as the poles asunder? You hold that the mass is a sacrifice appointed by God for the redemption and salvation of the living and dead. I hold such a doctrine to be an unbearable blasphemy, in which the passion of Jesus Christ is quite overthrown and set aside, as if it were of no effect whatever. I hold that our Blessed Saviour, in offering Himself up, presented Himself an eternal sacrifice by which our iniquities have been purged and cleansed, and ourselves received into the grace of the Father, and made partakers of the heavenly inheritance. I know you will tell me that you make the same sacrifice which Jesus has made, but I hold such an argument to be blasphemous, for that sacrifice can be made by no one else. You cannot fail to see that one of two things must take place : either I must acknowledge as true what I at present consider the horrible blasphemy of the mass, or, if I admit your arguments, I must trample under foot the cross of Christ. But the crowning desecration which I should commit would be the idolatry I should perpetrate by adoring a creature instead of God, which is a thing I hold to be altogether inexcusable, while you hold that it is all essential to salvation. Our opinions being so widely divergent, it would be useless to argue further on them. You are not likely to change yours, and certainly there is not the remotest probability of my changing mine."

"Pardon me, your Highness, if I submit that the arguments you have used are not yours," said Oriz, "and the opinions which at present misguide you are not the result of your own reflections. You have accepted them from that arch heretic, John Calvin—a man who, not content with reviling our holy mysteries, and

causing schism in our holy Church by argument and open means, attempts even to detract by personal slander from the character of those good and holy men who would help you in the right way. Excuse me, your Highness," he continued, seeing the indignation rise in Renée's face, "but please to recall to your memory a certain letter that John Calvin wrote to you when he first began to tamper with your faith. Before commencing his arguments, he tries to neutralise the faith you had in your chaplain by speaking of him in the most disrespectful manner, and advising you not to give credence to his utterances."

Astonishment for a moment took the place of indignation on Renée's countenance; for it was quite true that in one of the first letters Calvin had sent to her on the mass, he had strenuously advised her to give no ear to the doctrines preached by her chaplain.

"I know not, sir, how you became possessed of the knowledge that I received such a letter; but at the same time I admit that that good and pious man did write me a letter requesting me to beware of the doctrines and teachings of my then chaplain, and grateful, indeed, was I to him for the caution; for I afterwards discovered that his knowledge of the man was correct. Have I, then, such spies about me," she continued, her indignation again getting the better of her astonishment, "that even my private letters are brought under the notice of the Inquisition? That your duplicity was great and skilful, I knew; but I hardly considered it was carried to such a point. But our interview must now terminate. Use what influence you please with the Duke, my husband. Persuade him, if you can, to allow the torture to be applied to me"—Renée here stopped short for a moment, indignation impeding the current of her words; but she continued at last, "the torture for me, Renée of France!"

"Yes, madam," said Oriz, quietly, "if all other means fail. If prayers, entreaties, and arguments are of no avail, better a thousand to one that your body should suffer than that your soul should perish eternally. Nay, do not think," he continued, noticing the violent indignation which agitated Renée, "that it would be any indignity in such a cause to offer the torture to a princess of the house of France. High as your dignity may be, it has already been used, and with good effect, to princesses fully your equal. The Queen Juana of Spain has already suffered the torture of the cord, and with the happiest results. Her Majesty, who had for years refused to attend the mass and confess, after her punishment, to the great joy of her son, his Majesty Charles V., and the edification of all true believers, no longer offered any objection, but became a willing child of the Church. And doubtless your Highness, if we are pushed to that terrible necessity, will follow her example."

"You do not know me," said Renée, "if you think that any torture or any punishment you can inflict on me would make me desert those opinions

which I have conscientiously adopted. Once more, I believe the celebration of the mass to be nothing better than execrable idolatry. I will part with my life itself sooner than admit the contrary. If you are honest you will take that answer to the Duke my husband. Ponte," she continued, turning to her lady-in-waiting, "and Teresa, my child, bear witness to my determination. No power on earth shall induce me again to become a member of the Church of Rome! Now, sir, leave me; and, remember, I shall give orders to my servants never to admit you again into my presence."

Oriz, without changing a feature of his countenance, which remained perfectly impassive and impenetrable, bowed respectfully to her Highness, and the audience terminated.

CHAPTER IX.—AN ALARM.

ALTHOUGH the indignation raised in Renée's breast by the audacity of Oriz's language had supported her during their interview, it vanished shortly after he had quitted the room. For some time after he had left she remained seated on her chair of state, which had been placed on a slightly elevated dais, her features wearing a stern, dignified expression, as if she could hardly realise the fact that the Arch-inquisitor was no longer standing before her with calm determination stamped on his face. By degrees Renée's rigidity of feature began to soften, and she slowly turned her face to Madonna Ponte (who had stood on one side of her, and Teresa on the other) as if to seek for consolation and support; but she found none. The worthy Italian Swiss had been so shocked at the behaviour of the Inquisitor, that she had not yet been able to recover her self-possession, and she returned the gaze of the Duchess with one of mingled bewilderment and alarm. Renée then mechanically turned toward Teresa, and found that the tears were chasing each other rapidly down the poor girl's face. The sight of Teresa's tears had the effect of calling forth those of the Duchess. All the majesty of demeanour which she had hitherto maintained, and which, on occasion, she could assume with great effect,—although ordinarily she was simple and unpretending in the extreme,—now vanished, and, covering her face with her hands, and bending forward in the chair, she burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping.

Astonished at the violent outburst of grief of the Duchess, both Madonna Ponte and Teresa attempted to console her, though with little good effect. Ponte, who had now fully regained her self-possession, endeavoured to show Renée the necessity for calming her feelings, so that with her habitual wisdom she might be able to guide, as well as protect, those who without her aid would be but as sheep led to the slaughter.

"Do not talk to me in that tone, Ponte," said Renée, at last, "for in my present misery it seems almost like mockery. What power have I?" she continued, raising her head and looking almost angrily at her. "What support can I give to any

when I am myself as weak and powerless as a bruised reed?"

"Still," said Teresa, "your Highness has wisdom, and wisdom is power. Think how helpless the faithful in Ferrara will be without your aid and advice."

"My child, once more, what power have I to help them?" said Renée, emphatically. "My wisdom! Look at me now," she continued, turning her face, covered with tears, towards the young girl; "look at me, and then say whether, crushed as my poor spirit is by the heavy sorrow which oppresses it, I have the wisdom to guide others."

"Pardon me if I remind your Highness," said Teresa, "that there is a Power perfectly able to give you wisdom, and to point out the way to guide others with a certainty that all the princes of this world would in vain attempt to overthrow or oppose."

"True, my child. To that Power let us all humbly confide ourselves, and pray to be released out of the hands of the persecutor. But, should it not appear right in the eyes of the Almighty to place extraordinary power in my hands, of what use can I be in this matter? I am a woman, and at this moment as weak as either of you—possibly more so. All the power I once possessed was derived from others, who then supported and guided me. And where are they now? My illustrious relative and friend, King Francis, is dead, and my nephew, the present King of France, not only deserts me, but has sent the Inquisitor Oriz to persecute me and my Protestant subjects. The Duke, my husband, not only permits him to address me, but even to threaten me with imprisonment and the rack if I do not personally turn a traitress to my God—if I attempt to shelter or protect any of the scattered sheep of Christ's fold in this city, who are now without a shepherd."

"But if your Highness has no longer the sword of the mighty to protect you in your present difficulty, you have still your wisdom left to guide you, which, with aid from the Almighty, may yet be sufficient."

"My wisdom, Teresa, is on a par with my power," said the Duchess. "I never possessed much, and, as I said before, the little I once had sorrow hath stamped out of me."

"Your Highness has already guided us in many difficulties and dangers, and may do so again," said Madonna Ponte.

"Never again, Ponte," said the Duchess. "What you are pleased to call my wisdom was really the wisdom of others, who had me for their mouth-piece. And where are they now who inspired me with that wisdom? All those learned men in my suite, who were my countrymen and Protestants, have been dismissed, and I hear from them no more. Even the tried friend of my childhood, Madame Soubise, I have been constrained to dismiss. Where are now the men of piety, learning, and probity, who a few years since made my court one of the most brilliant in Europe? Where is Perigrino Morata? Thank heaven, he died before

the persecution began. Where are Celio Curione, Bartolomio Ricci, Chilian and Jean Sinapi, Antonio Flaminio, and many others on whose wisdom and fidelity I could rely? Are they not all dead or banished? Fannio of Faenza, Giorgio Siculo, and many others, have testified their faith in the piazza, and after passing through the hands of the executioner, received the crown of martyrdom. Those of the faithful and learned in other countries, who guided me with their wise advice, and encouraged me to maintain the faith and defend its professors, have now ceased to correspond with me. From Melancthon and Farel, who formerly addressed me frequently, I now no longer hear, and letters from my friend John Calvin are of very rare occurrence. All on whom I relied are either dead or seem to have deserted me in my trouble. Your father, Teresa, is the only friend I have to guide me, and he is able to give me but little aid."

"Excuse me, your Highness," said Teresa, who not only bore a profound love for her father, but unlimited respect for his wisdom and sagacity, "but I hardly think you do my father justice. There are few more learned men in Ferrara than he is, few more ardent in the Protestant cause, or more devoted to your Highness."

"All that I admit, my child," said Renée. "But at the same time your father, from his position as an upright judge, is impeded from offering me all the support he might do, lest he should put himself in opposition to the laws he is bound to administer with justice."

Renée now rose from her chair, and for some moments paced the room to and fro in deep affliction, her attendants the while maintaining an absolute silence. Presently she stopped, and wiping the tears from her eyes, said:—

"But this is not the time for me to give way without a struggle while I have one under my roof who has confided himself to me for protection, nor shall he fail to receive it as long as I can lift a finger or exercise a thought in his defence. One thing is certain, he must abide with us no longer than we can insure his escape with safety. I think you told me, Teresa, that your father had already taken steps for him to leave Ferrara?"

"He has, your Highness; but I am not certain whether they are all completely determined on, although I believe they are."

"At any rate," said the Duchess, "our better plan will be to talk the matter coolly over with him, so that we may hear what his wishes are on the subject, and, as far as they are consistent with his safety, carry them out. It is now more than ever imperative that his residence here should be kept a secret from all. To avoid any accident, you had better go, Teresa, to the apartments of the Princesses, and tell them I will excuse their attendance this afternoon; and you, Ponte, go to the apartments of the Pastor Ochino, and inform him I much wish to speak to him; and we shall then at our leisure be able to talk over his position with him. When you return we will meet in my private

sitting-room, where we can converse together without fear of being interrupted."

Teresa now left the room and proceeded to the apartments of the Princesses. On entering she found them in company with Sister Laura the nun, Madonna Bonifazio, and the Jesuit Pelletario. The Princesses no sooner saw their young friend than they rose from their chairs to meet her, and kissed her affectionately. Perceiving from the redness of her eyes that she had been weeping, the Princess Lucrezia asked her whether anything had occurred to make her unhappy. Teresa replied somewhat evasively that she felt very low-spirited, but she hoped it would soon pass off. The two Princesses looked at each other as if they were hardly satisfied with Teresa's answer, but they made no further remark on the subject. Sister Laura and Madonna Bonifazio also advanced to meet her, and received her in a most friendly manner, while the Jesuit spoke to her with great blandness and courtesy, not unmixed with kindness in his tone.

"I suppose you have come," said the Princess Eleanora to her, "to tell us that her Highness is ready to receive us?"

"Pardon me," said Teresa, "her Highness, on the contrary, has requested me to tell you that as she does not feel in good spirits this afternoon, nor altogether in good health, she will dispense with your visit. At the same time, she requests me to convey to you the assurance of the warm love she bears you, and her regret at not being able to receive you."

An expression of astonishment was now visible on the faces of the Princesses, as well as on those of Madonna Bonifazio and the nun, and they looked at one another in an inquiring manner, as if convinced there was some other cause than the one Teresa had named. Even the Jesuit Pelletario seemed somewhat to have lost his habitual command of feature, as his face now assumed an expression of sorrow when he heard the Duchess was indisposed, mingled with a thoughtfulness which showed he understood there was something concealed, and he was reflecting deeply what it might be.

"But, Teresa," said the Princess Eleanora, "have you told us the whole truth? Surely her Highness is not more unwell than you would allow us to imagine? These are not times, with the plague already appearing in Ferrara, for us to hear of the illness of our dear mother without wishing to know fully what ails her. You are not deceiving us, dear Teresa, by way of calming our fears?"

"No, I assure you," said Teresa. "The bodily illness of her Highness is of the most trifling description; in fact, it would perhaps have been better for me to have said fatigue rather than illness."

"Has her Highness then left the Palace this morning," said Madonna Bonifazio, "and overtired herself?"

"No," said Teresa, stammering; "her Highness has not left the Palace."

"Come, dear Teresa," said the Princess Lucrezia, "tell us the truth."

"Well," said Teresa, now fairly at bay, "the Duchess has received this morning an unexpected and very long visit, and she feels somewhat fatigued by it."

"A visit! and from whom?"

It was impossible for Teresa to escape this explicit question, and she replied—

"It was from a Dominican monk, sent by his Majesty the King of France, on a message to her Highness. He arrived in Ferrara only yesterday."

"Do you know his name?" asked Sister Laura, with much interest in her tone.

"Oriz."

"And what did he want with our mother?" said the Princess Eleanora. "What message could he bring her?"

Teresa now coloured deeply, and attempted to stammer out some excuse for not answering the question, but this she did in so confused and artificial a manner, as greatly to excite the curiosity of the Princesses and their two companions. Teresa, noticing their surprise, became even more confused, and an awkward silence of some moments ensued, which was broken by the Jesuit Pelletario, who during the conversation between Teresa and the Princesses had remained at some distance, apparently absorbed in thought, though marking attentively the embarrassment of the young girl, and doubtless drawing his own conclusions from it.

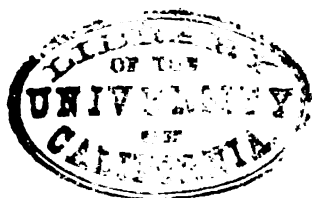
"Possibly," he said in his blandest tones, as he advanced towards the group, "it would be indiscreet to ask the object of the Reverend Father's visit to her Highness, even if your friend Teresa had been present at it. She may very naturally consider herself—and in my opinion if she does she has reason on her side—hardly authorized to speak on the subject without permission from her Highness. I think, if you will allow me to suggest it, it would perhaps be more discreet if we did not question her further in the matter."

Teresa made no remark, but merely bowed as if she admitted the correctness of the Jesuit's conclusion; but notwithstanding he had relieved her from a difficult position, she hardly felt grateful to him, for she was but ill at ease in his presence, and yet he had done nothing to excite either her suspicion or her anxiety. Although he had treated her with his habitual courtesy, and had turned his eye from her shortly after she had entered the room, and appeared pre-occupied with his own thoughts, she instinctively felt that he was paying marked attention to the conversation. On the few occasions when his eyes were bent upon her there was nothing in their expression but kindness and courtesy. Still the young girl felt that at that very moment he was reading her inmost thoughts, and that too in direct opposition to her own wish. Although not an idea had crossed her mind save of the most ingenuous and honourable description, the certainty that the suave, polished man who stood before her could read her with such perfect facility, occasioned in her an intolerably painful consciousness



"'YOU INTEND TO DENOUNCE ME, THEN,' SAID OCHINO"

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of her own mental inferiority. Annoyed with herself at giving way to the feeling, the poor girl stammered out some excuse about the Duchess requiring her presence, and asked permission to leave the room. Possibly this might not have been granted so readily, for the curiosity of the Princesses was but barely satisfied, had it not been for the intervention of the Jesuit, who suggested that, as her Highness the Duchess required Teresa's presence, it would hardly be respectful on their part to detain her, pleasing though her society might be to them. A glance, this time almost of gratitude, Teresa cast on the Jesuit, and then saluting the Princesses and their companions, she quitted the room.

A moment after Teresa had entered the private apartments of the Duchess, Ochino, accompanied by Madonna Ponte, followed her. The Duchess received him most graciously. She then informed him in detail of the visit she had that morning received from Oriz, and the conversation which had passed between them. Ochino seemed greatly surprised at the intelligence.

"Alas! this is terrible news indeed for the faithful in Ferrara," he said. "Mercy is unknown to that man, and unfortunately his cruelty is combined with a cunning and sagacity which renders it still more terrible. However, we are in the hands of the Almighty, and we must submit with resignation to his fiat."

"But while our lives are as naught in the balance," said Renée, "yours is very precious to the cause of truth; and the first object of our thoughts must be to provide for your welfare. Willingly would I have asked you to remain longer with us, but I can foresee as clearly as you do the terrible danger we are all in. The sooner you quit Ferrara the greater will be your chance of reaching Venice in safety. Preparations are already in progress to obtain a boat by which you may drop down the river in safety to Commachio, where you can easily find a vessel which shall convey you to Venice, unless you prefer returning across the Alps to Zurich."

"I should prefer first visiting Venice, your Highness," said Ochino. "There I have friends to protect me, and there, as I told you before, I am certain of receiving rich contributions for my mission in Zurich. I will obey the suggestion of your Highness, and quit Ferrara as soon as I possibly can, to make preparations for receiving those of our faith who, I can easily perceive, will shortly be obliged to leave the duchy. At the same time, if your Highness will permit it, I should much like to have another meeting before I quit the city, in order that I may, to the best of my ability, encourage those who may be likely to swerve from the right way as soon as the persecutions, which will shortly be in store for them, shall fall heavily upon them."

"I would willingly oblige you," said Renée, "if it were practicable, but I hardly think it will be so. To-morrow night, at the latest, you must leave

Ferrara, and to collect the faithful together in my private chapel this evening will, I am afraid, be impossible. I have no doubt, however, that some few of us will be able to assemble together, and I will get Teresa to go to her father's with Madonna Ponte, and ask him to enlist the services of the young Swiss in collecting together what few of our faith he can before the evening, though it is now so late in the afternoon that I am afraid not many of those who last heard you will be present at this meeting."

The conversation now turned on Ochino's mission in Zurich, and his prospect of success. He detailed to the Duchess the different arrangements he had made for the reception of any fresh fugitives who might fly there for shelter. The Duchess then made many inquiries respecting different members of the Protestant faith who had already fled from Ferrara, and among them a certain Luigia Berenetti and her son, in whom she had taken great interest, supplying them with funds for their escape. Ochino did not remember their name as being among those fugitives who had assembled at Zurich.

"You surprise me," said Renée, "as she told me, when leaving, that she intended to reside for the future in Zurich. She is a woman of very modest and retiring disposition, and very possibly has not introduced herself to you, or she may not have arrived there till after you left. I much regret, however, that you have not seen her, as I feel great interest in her."

"I am by no means certain that she may not be with us," said Ochino; "for shortly before I quitted Zurich several Italians joined us, and she might have been among the number, though I have forgotten her name. I have with me a list of all our congregation, and if your Highness will permit me, I will fetch it from my room, and I shall then be able to give you more accurate information on the subject."

Ochino now proceeded to his own chamber, when, having obtained the list, he descended the staircase, and entering the corridor, he found himself face to face with the Jesuit Pelletario. Recognising each other, both stopped short, and for some moments silent looks passed between them. Pelletario at last said with much sorrow in his tone—

"I am grieved, my brother, to find you here, as it places me in a most painful position, and the more so from the vivid remembrance of the friendship which once existed between us. Warm as that was, and painful as it undoubtedly is for me to take any steps against you, I cannot allow a private feeling of my own to interfere with my duty either to our holy cause or to his Highness."

"You intend to denounce me then?" said Ochino.

"Candidly I do. I have unfortunately, as you yourself must admit, no alternative. To-morrow it will be my painful duty to inform the Duke that you are residing in the Palace. I should have done so this evening, but that I understand his Highness has left the castle to pass the night in either the

Belfiore or the Belvedere Palace, I know not which. He will return, however, to the castle to-morrow. I am in doubt whether it is not my duty at once to inform the Holy Office that you are in Ferrara, and I should do so without a moment's hesitation but that you are the guest of her Highness; and I am not certain whether, out of respect to the Duke, I ought not in the first place to put the matter into his hands. Once more, believe me I shall do so with great sorrow; but, as I said before, my personal feelings must not interfere with my duty." So saying he courteously bowed his head to Ochino, and, without saying another word, passed on towards the apartments of the Princesses.

Although the literal meaning of the words Pelletario uttered showed but little good feeling towards Ochino, there was at the same time considerable kindness noticeable in his tone, as well as an expression of much sympathy on his handsome and intelligent features. Not only was there a sorrowful accent in his words, but he spoke them with remarkable slowness, glancing at Ochino the while with a peculiar expression, as if wishing to obtain his particular attention. Moreover, on the word "to-morrow" he laid a strong emphasis, as if wishing to convey a meaning beyond that of the word itself. After a moment's reflection, it became evident to Ochino that there was more of a friendly intention towards him in Pelletario's address than might have been at first apparent from the words he uttered. Altogether it seemed as if he wished to give his old friend an opportunity of making his escape that evening. At any rate, Ochino understood it so, and determined, if possible, to profit by the suggestion.

When Ochino entered the private sitting-room of the Duchess, it was easy to perceive that he had some unpleasant intelligence to communicate. Before the Duchess could question him on the subject, he narrated to her the short interview which had passed between him and the Jesuit.

At first Renée appeared indignant that Pelletario had intruded himself into the portion of the palace where Ochino had met him.

"His instructions," said Renée, "were to confine himself solely to the apartments of the Princesses, nor will I allow him to intrude himself beyond. All the dominion now left me to rule over is but one portion of this palace; but that portion shall remain inviolable as long as I have the power to maintain it."

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Ochino, "if I submit that possibly in disobeying the regulation which prohibited him from visiting your portion of the palace, he might have been actuated to a certain extent by a friendly feeling towards me. Although it is perfectly true, that in the words he uttered, not one of good feeling could be detected, yet at the same time there was much kindness in his tone and manner. He evidently wished, as I believe, to impress upon me the necessity there was for my escaping, if possible, this evening. Whether it would be worth while for me to attempt it is

another matter; for, broken-spirited as I am from the dangers surrounding our brethren in this city, were I to follow my own impulse, I should prefer staying to die with them than to escape without them."

"That must not be," said Renée. "Your life is too valuable to our cause for it to be needlessly sacrificed. But now remains the difficult question—how, at so short a notice, can we provide for your escape? To remain here till to-morrow will bring on you certain destruction; and yet it is very doubtful whether before to-morrow evening it will be possible to make the necessary preparations. Your better plan will be to remain with us till after nightfall, and then to seek the dwelling of the Judge Biagio Rosetti. Tell him the position in which you are placed, and ask shelter from him till to-morrow. Do you not think that will be best, Teresa?" she continued, turning to the young girl.

"I can suggest no better plan," said Teresa; "and I need hardly say that my father will receive him with open arms, and do everything in his power to assist him to escape. You know where my father lives?" she continued, turning to Ochino.

"Perfectly well. I know every street in Ferrara, and shall be able to find my way to his house without the slightest difficulty. I have no doubt the agents of the Inquisition will seek me here to-morrow, as soon as Pelletario shall have given the Duke notice that I am in Ferrara. Not a word must therefore be said to lead to the place of my concealment; for although I care but little for myself in the matter, it may bring misfortune on the head of your excellent father. Again, it is more than probable he may find for me some other place of concealment, as suspicion will naturally turn on him when it is found that I am not in the Palace."

"I have no doubt," said Teresa, "that my father will ask for the assistance of the Swiss, Camille Gurdon, whom you saw here, and will confide to him the means for contriving your escape, as he will not only be more energetic, but less likely to be suspected than my father. I feel quite hopeful that, once under his care, your escape will be effected with little difficulty, for he is not only shrewd and cautious, but resolute and energetic. At least, so my father thinks," she continued.

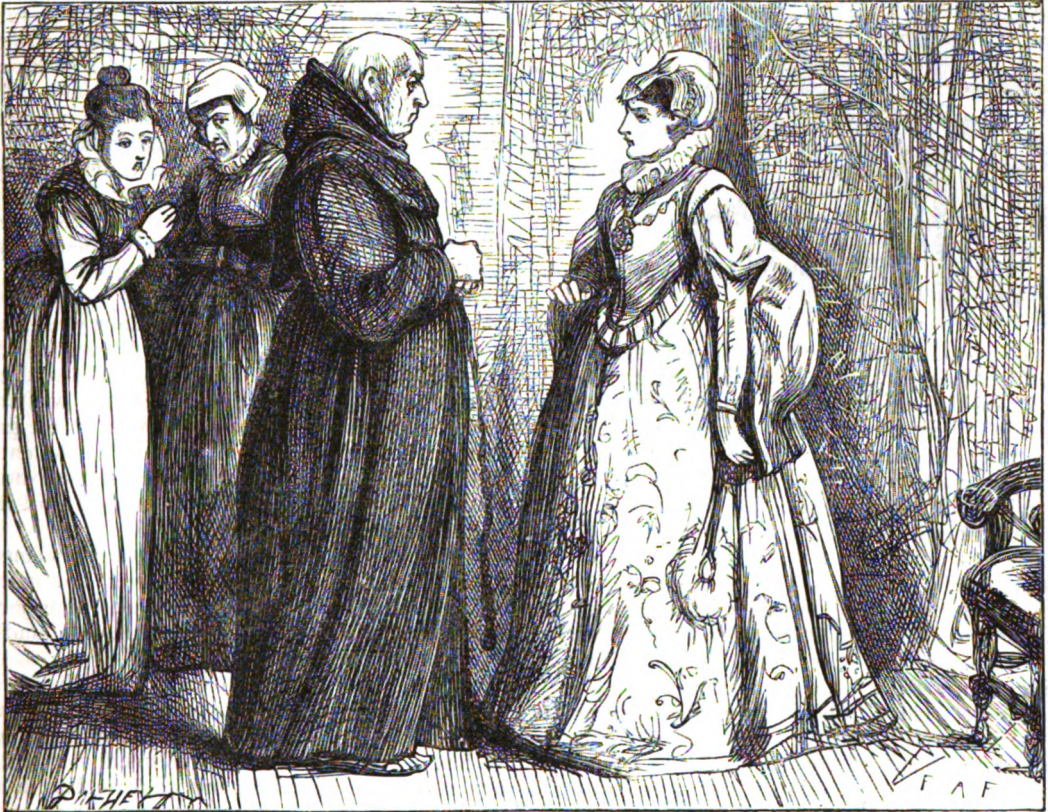
"You will indeed be in good hands if you intrust yourself to him," said Renée. "And now that we have so far determined on the course to be pursued, let us talk of other things. Teresa, my child, go to the oak chest beside my bed, and take from it the small box in which I keep some of my jewels, and bring it to me."

Teresa obeyed, and going into the bed-chamber, opened the lid of the heavy, carved oak chest, with its ponderous lock, in which the ladies in Italy in Renée's time were accustomed to keep their richer dresses and valuables. From it she took a small silver casket exquisitely chased by Benvenuto Cellini for the late Duchess Lucrezia

Borgia, and which, on Renée's marriage with her son, the reigning Duke, had been presented to her by his father Alfonso, together with many of the rich jewels Lucrezia had worn.

Teresa carried the casket to the Duchess, who, opening the secret spring which fastened it, took from it a purse containing a number of sequins and a diamond armlet of great value (one of the jewels of the late Duchess), and placing them in Ochino's hand, she begged he would, when in Venice, exchange the latter into money, and apply the proceeds as well as the purse of sequins to the uses of the

mission in Zurich. Ochino received the contribution most thankfully, and reminded her of the text, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord," and told her that without doubt her gift would be repaid to her a hundred-fold. He now proposed that they should spend the remainder of the evening, till it was time for him to depart, in prayer. Willingly the Duchess agreed to the proposition, and Teresa having been despatched to the chapel for the Italian translation of the Scriptures. Ochino read a portion of the New Testament. Then, all kneeling down, he prayed with great fer-



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vour, begging that the bounty and protection of the Almighty might be bestowed, not only on the Duchess and her suite, but on the suffering members of Christ's flock, dispersed in Ferrara and throughout the whole duchy; that courage and patience might be given them to support the persecutions which were too probably in store for them, and enable them to maintain the faith even under the tortures of the rack, in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or amid the flames on the Piazza; that God would raise up for them wise counsellors, who would be able to guide and protect them in their

adversity, and support them with his Spirit till the day should arrive when truth should be made manifest among them, and the sword of the persecutor drop from his hand.

It was dark night when Ochino had concluded his devotions. After a sorrowful leave-taking with the Duchess, Teresa, carrying a small lamp in her hand, conducted him stealthily down-stairs to a private door of the Palace, and, having ascertained that no loiterers were in sight, bade him farewell.

Ochino bent his steps towards the dwelling of the Judge.

CHAPTER X.—THE CONFERENCE.



FROM an early hour the next morning all was stir and animation in the convent of the Corpus Domini. In consequence of Renée's frank admission to Oriz, that she had adopted the Reformed doctrines, and had expressed her determination to continue in them, the Superior of the Dominicans the

same evening had sent messages not only to the Archbishops and Bishops of Ferrara, and the heads of the regular clergy, but to the Superiors of the different monastic institutions, requesting their attendance at a meeting to be held the next day in the refectory of the Dominican convent, to take into consideration the best means to be adopted at once to put a stop to the baneful heresy which now afflicted the Church in the Duchies of Ferrara and Modena. The message also stated that another object of the meeting was to receive the Reverend Dr. Matthew Oriz, Chief Inquisitor of France, who had been sent by the Most Christian King Henry II. on a special mission to the Duchy.

By nine o'clock, the refectory having been put in perfect order for the meeting, and the lay brother in charge of the arrangements having declared all to be in readiness, the Superior of the convent and Oriz descended to inspect the preparations which had been made. After expressing their approval the lay brother retired, and an earnest conversation ensued between the two monks—earnest at least so far as the apparently impassive nature of Oriz would allow him to show. Their conversation principally turned on the business to be presented to the meeting, and the necessity there was for impressing on it that the moment had come when energetic action should be taken. Oriz, his habitually calm eye lightening up as he spoke, expressed his opinion that now the plague of heresy in the Duchy might be extirpated at a single blow, and the Church again resume her authority. The Superior fully agreed with Oriz. In fact, the two monks seemed to have changed their relative positions, for while Oriz in his manner showed towards his companion

the obedience and respect due to the Superior of a convent, in his tone he undisguisedly assumed the lead; while, again, the Superior, accepting the outward signs of respect shown him by Oriz, quietly acquiesced in every opinion he uttered, and expressed his willingness to carry out every plan of action suggested.

The first delegate to the meeting who arrived at the convent was the General of the Capuchins. This office had been twice held by Ochino when he was a brother of the order. A strong difference, however, existed between the present General and Ochino. While the latter was all animation, brilliant in his discourse, and graceful in his person, his successor was even common in his appearance, of heavy frame, and unintellectual countenance. His principal qualifications for the appointment he held were those of a discreet superintendent of the funds of his order, and an attorney-like astuteness in prosecuting with success obscure points connected with the legality of pecuniary or property claims supposed to belong to the iraternity.

On being introduced to Oriz, he shortly expressed the great gratification he felt at the arrival of so eminent a man, who, he had no doubt, would contribute greatly not only to the spiritual welfare of the Church, but to her power as well. Oriz gratefully thanked the Capuchin for the compliment he had paid him, and in return trusted that he should have the General's assistance in the good work they were about to enter on.

"You may be perfectly certain," said the General, "that all the assistance in my power, and in that of the brethren of our order, shall be willingly rendered you, and I flatter myself you will find us energetic soldiers of the Church."

"At the same time," said Oriz, "the Church not only requires brave soldiers, but disciplined ones as well. Without discipline one-half our power will be lost. We have already reformed the plan of action of the Holy Office, and we trust that all will assist us by putting into our hands whatever information may come under their notice. Not that we doubt the discretion or ability of others, yet, at the same time, one central authority is necessary, and by permission of our Holy Father the Pope, that is at present placed in our hands; so that by accumulating all kinds of information, we may be better able to strike the blow where it will be most effective."

"I perfectly agree with you," said the Capuchin General; "and I moreover hold that no information, of however trifling a description, should be kept from you; and in proof, the object of my early arrival at the convent was to place in your hands some information, possibly trifling in itself, which reached me yesterday. In the morning, an old man of the name of Carlo Pedretti, formerly employed to strike the hours in the Rigobello



"—HE HAD WORN HIS COWL DEEP OVER HIS FACE."



tower, called at our convent, to inquire after a brother whom he had brought with him into the city two nights before, but whom he had parted with before reaching the convent. On inquiring among the brethren, no one was found answering to the description. The old man was told he was in error, as all the brethren had been at the benediction in the convent that evening, and no one had afterwards quitted the building. The old man, however, insisted that he was not in error, stating that he had rowed a travelling Capuchin across the river long after Ave Maria, as the regular ferry boats were not allowed to work later. In vain was he assured that no travelling brother had arrived at the convent on the evening in question. Pedretti maintained that it was the case, and that he had conducted him nearly to the corner of the street. On being required to give a description of the friar, he replied that he had not seen his features, for besides that it was nearly dark when he first addressed him, he now remembered that he had worn his cowl deep over his face, a fact which he did not remark at the time, but which afterwards had recurred to his memory more than once. On being asked what object he had in visiting the new-comer, he replied with some hesitation, that he had no particular reason beyond being somewhat uneasy in his conscience, for although nothing extraordinary had struck him at the time in the Friar's behaviour, there had ever since appeared to him to be some mystery about it. In the first place, he did not clearly understand why he should have objected to enter the city by the Via del Po. The Porto del Po was not at so great a distance from the Capuchin convent as to have induced the Friar to wade a mile through the clay and marshes when it was nearly dark, and when it was uncertain whether he would be able to get ferried over, especially when he knew that without trouble he could have obtained a place in the ferry-boat at Mal-Albergo. He couldn't understand it, he said. The way there would have been quite as easy to find as by the Porta San Giorgio; and besides that, he would have passed by the convent of the Corpus Domini, where he could have asked his way if he had had any difficulty. And then again it struck him, that in leaving the high road and crossing the marshes, it almost seemed as if the Friar wished to visit the heretic ferryman, Giacomo, as he was evidently proceeding in a straight line to his house. We questioned him," continued the Capuchin General, "as to what could have put these doubts into his head. He replied, that on thinking over the conversation which had passed between them, he remembered that the Friar had not only defended and spoken well of the Duchess, but had also made particular inquiries whether the heretic Judge Biagio Rosetti was still in Ferrara. Altogether he had been unhappy about it ever since, and had called at the convent to get such explanation about it as might serve as a salve to his conscience. Although, of course, we did not let Pedretti see we were at all anxious

on the subject, we caused inquiries to be made through the whole city, but no tidings could we gain of the Friar. I therefore wish to submit to you whether it may not be possible that some heretic of note has introduced himself into the city under the disguise of a member of our Holy Order."

"Nothing more likely," said the Superior of the Dominicans. "We all know that the arch-heretic John Calvin himself has already more than once visited the city in disguise, to encourage in their evil ways those whom by his pernicious doctrines he had led astray. The subject shall receive the serious attention of the Holy Office, and we are most grateful to you for having brought it under our notice."

It was now nearly time for the meeting, and members of the different bodies began to arrive. Among the earliest were the Archbishop of Ferrara and the Jesuit Pelletario. Then came the delegates from the Carthusian monastery in the Via Borsa, attended by two brethren of the order, the Superior of the Theatins, and many members of other different religious bodies, as well as the most eminent of the parochial clergy, till the large hall of the refectory was completely filled with clergy all anxious to take a part in the proceedings, as well as to receive the celebrated Inquisitor and doctor in theology, who was that day to be presented to them.

After many of the most notable among them had been presented to Oriz, the Archbishop of Ferrara was invited to preside, and having taken his seat in a small, slightly elevated open pulpit, which somewhat resembled the throne of a judge, with Oriz on the one side of him and the Superior of the Dominicans on the other, the rest of the meeting ranged themselves round him, the whole forming one of those picturesque combinations for which the costumes of the Roman Catholic clergy appear so peculiarly adapted.

The Archbishop now rose to address the meeting. He told them that although several among them had already formed the acquaintance of Dr. Matthew Oriz, it was now his pleasing duty to introduce him generally to the assembly. Their reverend brother, who had filled the high office of Chief Inquisitor of France, had now arrived in Ferrara on a special mission of importance from the Most Christian King, His Majesty Henry II., as well as authorised by His Holiness to take the supreme direction of the Holy Office established in the city. Of the special mission with which his reverend brother had been entrusted by his Majesty, it was not for him to speak. What the purport of his instructions might be he knew nothing, but of this he was persuaded that, whether he divulged or kept them secret, they might all be assured that their reverend brother would be actuated by one principle—the advancement and good of the Church. Of this he could promise the reverend doctor, that whatever help he might require from the regular clergy or monastic orders in the diocese, he would be certain to receive it—all being assured that a man of his

eminence, and holding as he did the important position of Chief Inquisitor of France, would ask for no aid or information which they would not willingly accord him.

A simultaneous burst of acquiescence broke from the assembly, and when it had somewhat subsided the Inquisitor Oriz rose to address the meeting. Flattering as had been the reception they had given him, it seemed not to make the slightest impression on his feelings. Not the least appearance of excitement was noticeable on his countenance, and the tone of his voice was calm and unimpassioned. He commenced by thanking them for the assistance he was convinced every individual would willingly accord him, but before asking it he should like to explain, as far as discretion would allow him, the object of his mission, and the reasons, beyond the commands of his superiors, which had induced him to undertake it.

"It was not," he said, "any doubt of the energy or ability shown by the Dominican Fathers in Ferrara, in the management of the duties of the Holy Office, which induced his Majesty the King of France to request me to undertake the mission, as that Most Christian king would have been averse to interfere in either the ecclesiastical or political affairs of the Duchy of Ferrara. On the contrary, it was the direct request and application of his Highness the Duke himself, that induced his Majesty to intrust me with the mission. In the summer of last year the Duke wrote a letter to his Majesty the King of France, in which, after speaking of the unfortunate spread of heresy in his dominions—heresy from which his own family were not altogether free—he requested his Majesty to send him an ecclesiastic well-versed in argument, and accustomed to the duties of an inquisitor, who might succeed in bringing the illustrious Duchess Renée of France back into the fold of the Church, as well as assist, by his advice and experience, his brother Dominicans in extirpating the evil which had been introduced into the city by the arch-heretic, John Calvin, and which has since taken such strong root in Ferrara, that it was lately pointed at by Lutherans themselves as the centre of Protestantism in Italy. Fortunately, through the admirable energy of the reverend fathers of the Inquisition, aided by the counsel and wisdom of that true son of the Church, the reigning Duke, that unhappy state of things no longer exists. In Italy at present heresy has no rallying-point, nor can Ferrara be now designated as the stronghold of schismatics, for although there are still many deluded ones resident in the city, they are as sheep without a shepherd. Already heresy is nearly extinct in the valley of Aosta, that district which Calvin considered exclusively his own. In Como hardly a heretic remains; and the schismatic Churches of Pisa, Florence, and Naples are either extinct or their deluded members meet secretly to perform a worship scarcely less obnoxious to our Church than the worship of the arch-fiend himself. In Venice, notwithstanding the headstrong opposition of the

senate, and their determination not to allow the ecclesiastical law, which should rule all laws, to be dominant over the civil power, the true religion is regaining her sway. Still the heretics in all parts, deceived by their priesthood, look to Ferrara as their rallying-point, and believe they will yet receive support and protection from the illustrious Duchess, who has now, under the blessing of heaven, lost all her power to do evil. From this idea it will be our duty to undeceive them. We must prove to them that Ferrara is no longer the hotbed of schism it was when Ochino openly defied the powers of Rome, and the arch-heretic Calvin (though under an assumed name) boldly opened a school for the dissemination of his schismatic doctrines under the protection of the Duchess herself, and openly preached defiance of the Pope, hurling his blasphemous denunciations at what he termed the idolatry of the mass, that most respected and beloved of the mysteries of our Church. All this, we must shortly prove to the whole of Italy, is a thing of the past. Although it is certain there are many in Ferrara who still cling with determined tenacity to the depraved doctrines of the so-called Reformers, there can be no doubt that a divine blessing has now fallen on the labours of the holy Inquisition, and that in a short time Italy will be freed from the pestilence, and the Church resume again her original power and splendour."

Although during the greater part of his address, which lasted nearly an hour, Oriz maintained his usual calm tone and manner, his words falling slowly and impressively on the ear, when he spoke of the hope he felt that the Church would soon again be dominant, his manner suddenly changed so completely, that he could hardly have been recognised as the same individual. He had stood till then with his body slightly bent, and keeping his eyes on the floor of the hall, occasionally, and only for a moment, raising them when he personally addressed the Archbishop, and then lowering them again when he resumed the thread of his subject. But when he touched on the glorious prospect of the Church he drew himself up to his full height, and with wonderful animation gazed on the assembled priests and monks, his voice assuming at the time such power of tone and fluency of diction as to make him appear almost inspired. At the conclusion of his address, however, the brilliant animation which had sparkled in his eye suddenly vanished, and the flush which had at the moment overspread his countenance disappeared, leaving the same marble hue which his complexion had worn before he commenced speaking. Again assuming his habitual calm demeanour, and bowing humbly and almost deprecatingly to the buzz of admiration which spontaneously burst from the assembly, he withdrew from his prominent position beside the Archbishop, and retired to one of the back seats, as if their congratulations and applause were painful to him.

The Father Fabrizio, the Superior of the convent of the Dominicans, now rose to address the meeting.

He said that although he had wished to resign his office as Superior of the convent, the Reverend Father Oriz would not allow him. He much regretted the fact, as in his humble opinion the interests of the Church would have been advanced by it. At the same time it was his duty not to put his wish in opposition to one so far more learned than himself. It was his duty to obey, and he would do so. He could not disguise from himself that it would be detrimental to the interests of the Church, and an act of presumption on his part, if he continued longer as the head of the executive of the Holy Office in extirpating the remains of heresy in Ferrara. For the future that duty would be put into the hands of the Reverend Dr. Oriz, and he (the Superior) would, in all subjects connected with the Holy Office, act as his subordinate. He flattered himself that although the secular power had been but little used latterly in Ferrara, the reverend Father would find that they had not been idle. True, they had occasionally employed the secular power, and punished in an exemplary manner many of those who, after due admonition, had been found obstinate in their heresy, or had relapsed. They had done so the rather as examples and warnings to others, as well as to show that the Fathers of the Holy Office were not sleeping at their posts. But while the outward demonstrations of energetic action were perhaps less visible in Ferrara than in many other towns in Italy where the foul heresy of Lutheranism or Calvinism had taken root, they should be fully able to prove to the reverend Father that they had been actively employed the while, and were totally free from any charge of lukewarmness. Anticipating the arrival of the reverend Father, they had lately principally occupied themselves in obtaining information as to the spread of heresy in the Duchy, and what were the numbers and position in life of those infected by it; and so well had they succeeded that at the present moment he could confidently state they were ripe for action. They had now but to place the reins of power in the hands of their reverend brother, and, no doubt, in a short time there would not be a city in Italy clearer from the stain of heresy than Ferrara.

Several other speakers followed the Superior of the Dominicans, and among them a monk of the Carthusian Order, whose convent was at Modena, but who had now arrived at Ferrara for the purpose of giving the Holy Office a description of the state of the Church in his city. After expressing his great satisfaction at having heard the address, and personally making the acquaintance of the Reverend Dr. Matthew Oriz, of whose reputation as a true soldier of the Church all Christian Europe was well aware, he proceeded to describe the condition of the heretics in the sister city of Modena, and the exertions made by the clergy—especially the monastic orders—to extirpate it. He regretted to state that Modena was scarcely less infected than Ferrara itself. In the latter city the populace had been misled by many teachers of eminence and ability, who had not only infected the learned, but

obtained their assistance in disseminating the doctrines they taught. The mass of the populace, unable to understand the sophistry made use of, yet respecting those more learned than themselves, had adopted those doctrines without attempting to understand the fallacious arguments brought forward to support them. In Modena, on the contrary, the Calvinists were, as a rule, of a far less educated class than in Ferrara, and less likely to offer any effectual opposition to the power of the Inquisition. At present, as in Ferrara, the clergy of Modena had for some time past been openly less energetic in their punishment of offenders, but they had in the meantime made themselves thoroughly acquainted with the names, opinions, and ability of those professing heretical doctrines; and they now only waited for the example of Ferrara, to strike one last powerful blow that should put an end to schism in their city.

A monk from Commachio next spoke, who described the state of that town as strongly resembling Modena. Several others followed, all of whom agreed that the time had now arrived for energetic action, and that shortly there would not be found in the whole of the Duchy an individual who was not a true son of the Church of Rome.

The meeting now broke up, and for some time conversation on the state of the Church and matters relating to ecclesiastical affairs, was carried on among the members, who stood in groups, till the bell tolled for mass, and the whole assembly then forming themselves into a procession, entered the magnificent church of the Corpus Domini, attached to the convent, where mass was performed with great pomp by the Archbishop. When it was concluded, the principal doors, which had been closed during the ceremony, were opened to allow the congregation to leave the church. But here an unexpected obstacle presented itself to their quiet departure. In the open space before the church an immense crowd had collected, their curiosity having been raised by the large number of ecclesiastics they had seen enter the monastery. Indeed, judging that some ceremony of unusual magnificence was likely to be performed in the church, they had assembled to witness it. They were, however, doomed to be disappointed, for the sacristans having received notice that the mass would be strictly private, the only persons allowed to be present being ecclesiastics and members of the different orders of monks, the great doors of the church were closed, much to the annoyance of the populace who wished to assist at it. Even when the doors were opened many rushed forward anxious to enter the building, and the sacristans and lay-brothers at first experienced much trouble in stopping them. In a short time, however, order was completely restored. The venerable Archbishop advanced to the door, followed by the rest of the assembly, with the exception of the Jesuit Pelletario, who remained performing some devotions at one of the altars. As soon as the Archbishop was recognised all disorder subsided, and the assembled crowd, after leaving a space for

him and those that followed to walk through, devoutly knelt to receive his blessing as he passed. He continued his way onward, bestowing his benediction on them as he went, till he had reached the street leading to the castle, when he entered the litter in which he had arrived at the convent. Those of the clergy who had followed then dispersed to their different homes, and in a short time the excitement which the meeting had caused among the populace completely subsided.

CHAPTER XI.—THE TRIAL OF STRENGTH.

THE Jesuit Pelletario, having been invited to attend the meeting of ecclesiastics to be held in the refectory of the convent of the Corpus Domini, left the palace of San Francisco an hour before the time appointed, for the purpose of first calling at the castle to ascertain whether the Duke had returned to it, and probably, as he had threatened, to inform his Highness that Ochino was there a guest of the Duchess. On arriving at the gate of the lions, the sentinel on duty immediately recognised him, and calling to the officer on guard at the inner gate, the drawbridge was lowered to allow him to enter. The officer received the Duke's confessor with great respect, and begged permission to kiss his hand, which Pelletario allowed him to do, and he then asked if his Highness had returned to the castle.

"He returned at a late hour yesterday evening, reverend Father," was the officer's reply.

"Is he here now?"

"He is; but I heard it rumoured that his Highness intends leaving Ferrara this afternoon to visit Belriguardo. How far this is correct I know not; but doubtless the major-domo will be able to give you more accurate information on the subject. Is there anything further I can do to serve you, reverend Father?"

"Nothing at present, I thank you," said Pelletario, and saluting condescendingly those who had gathered around him, he left the gate and proceeded up the grand staircase to the landing, where he met the major-domo at the doorway leading into the great hall. By this official Pelletario was received with even greater demonstrations of respect than had been shown him by the officer on guard at the drawbridge. To his inquiry in what way he could serve him, Pelletario merely replied by asking if his Highness had left his private apartments.

"He has, reverend Father," was the major-domo's answer. "He is now deeply occupied in his cabinet with two noblemen, with whom he had made an appointment. Indeed, he gave orders that no one was to disturb him; but doubtless he would make an exception in your case. Shall I inform him you wish to see him?"

At first the Jesuit appeared somewhat undecided what answer to make; but at length he said, "Is it true that his Highness intends to leave Ferrara to-day to visit Belriguardo?"

"It is."

"At what time does he propose leaving?"

"Up to the present moment I have received no precise orders on the subject, beyond that I am to see everything is in readiness for his departure. I am, however, certain he will not leave before the afternoon."

"Why not?"

"Because his Highness has made an appointment to receive at noon the reverend Dominican, Father Oriz."

Pelletario heard this intelligence with considerable surprise. He remained for some moments silent, and then said,—

"Do you know whether the appointment was made at the request of the Duke, or was it asked for by the reverend Father?"

"At the request of the reverend Father. Yesterday evening he sent a lay brother to inquire whether his Highness had arrived; and on being told that he was not expected till late at night, he went back to the convent, and this morning early—in fact, before the Duke had risen from his bed—the same lay brother returned, and waited till I had an opportunity to deliver his message, to which the Duke replied that he would receive the reverend Father at noon. But shall I tell his Highness you wish to see him?"

"No," said Pelletario, "I will not disturb him now, for no doubt he is occupied on business of importance. I will return later."

So saying, the Jesuit took leave of the major-domo, and descending the staircase, quitted the castle.

The pace of Pelletario on his way to the convent was slow and deliberate in the extreme, and an expression of deep thought was on his face. So pre-occupied was he that he took but little notice of the respectful salutations he received from those he met on the road, an omission the more remarkable on his part, as he was habitually courteous and condescending to all. Nor was he without cause for his pre-occupation. As father-confessor to the Duke, his position was one of the most influential in the state, and he was universally courted and flattered. Hitherto he had been without a rival, but was that likely to continue? From the regular clergy and monastic orders in the city he had little cause for anxiety, but his mind was by no means clear with regard to Oriz. True, he only knew him by reputation, but fame spoke of him as a man of great ability, much liked by the monarchs of Spain and France. Besides, he had great confidence placed in him by his Holiness. To have arrived at such eminence he calculated must have required something more than profound theological learning and great energy in the cause of the Roman Catholic religion. He must also be possessed of that valuable qualification—the power to make himself liked by the princes of the earth, and if he had already succeeded so well with others, might he not be equally successful with the Duke? True, Oriz had not succeeded at his interview with the Duchess, but he (Pelletario) had also been unable to convince her. One difference, however, he could discover between his own interview with

Renée, and that of Oriz. Although she had positively refused to listen to his arguments, he parted from her without any display of anger on her part, while she had evidently been greatly offended with Oriz; and Renée was not of a disposition to easily forget a personal affront. At the same time the Jesuit could not help admitting that the very energy of the Dominican which had caused so much anger in the breast of the Duchess might have a contrary effect with her husband. All things considered, Pelletario could not disguise from himself that his power and position was at the moment in jeopardy, and that it behoved him to play his part with great caution. To be the better able to do this, he determined, if possible, to have a trial of strength that day with the Inquisitor, and judge by the results whether he had as formidable an adversary to deal with as appeared probable.

It will be remembered that when the mass terminated, and the assembly of divines quitted the church, Pelletario alone remained performing some devotional act before one of the altars. This, however, ended shortly after the church was cleared. Then rising from his knees, he requested the sacristan to allow him to pass by the private way which led from the church into the convent, as he wished to have an interview with the Reverend Doctor Oriz. The sacristan—to whom, of course, Pelletario was well-known—with profound respect, not only conducted him through the private door leading into the convent, but was on the point of accompanying him across the quadrangle to the cell occupied by Oriz, when the latter was seen descending the staircase, with his head covered, and evidently on the point of leaving the building.

Pelletario, having dismissed the sacristan, now advanced towards the Dominican.

"Pardon my interrupting you," he said, "but I was loth to return to the palace without first complimenting you on your admirable address to the meeting this morning. Had our Church possessed a few more advocates with your ability and energy, the lamentable schism which has afflicted Christendom would never have taken the deep root it has. At the same time we have reason to be thankful that at last one has sprung up amongst us who will crush with his heel the head of the serpent which hitherto has remained with comparative impunity in the city."

"You do me too much honour," said Oriz, humbly; "or, if I have shown any of the energy or ability for which you compliment me, I am indebted to a far higher power than my own talent or inspiration."

"At least, you must admit," said Pelletario, "that if I am in error, I am not alone in it, and the manner in which the whole assembly of divines hailed the idea that you were about to assume the direction of the Inquisition in Ferrara proves it."

"Still, it might rather be attributed to their kind feeling than to my merits," said Oriz. "Yet flattering as their reception was, it rather pained than pleased

me, as it seemed to convey the idea, that our reverend brother, the Superior of the convent, had not, in their estimation, conducted the affairs of the Holy Office with sufficient energy. With such a view I by no means agree. He has had great difficulties to contend with; more so than usually falls to the lot of our office, in the opposition shown him by her Highness the Duchess. On the whole, I consider he has conducted the duties of the Holy Office with great discretion and ability."

"I perfectly agree with you," said Pelletario, "in the opinion you have formed of the ability and energy of our reverend brother, the Superior of the convent, and I am much pleased to hear the kind view you take of his conduct. But, pardon me," he continued, looking on the sun-dial at the wall, "for detaining you, for I perceive you are about to quit the convent. I wish to visit his Highness to-day at noon; so, unless you are going my way, I will bid you good morning."

"It is my intention likewise to call upon his Highness," said Oriz; "in fact, I have received his commands to do so."

"If I should not be disturbing your meditations, or appear indiscreet," said Pelletario, "I should much like to accompany you."

The Dominican having expressed the pleasure he should feel in Pelletario's society, the two monks quitted the convent together.

As the time that would elapse in passing from the Dominican convent to the castle, at even the ordinary slow and deliberate pace usually maintained by ecclesiastics, would scarcely exceed a quarter of an hour, Pelletario easily perceived he had but little time to lose in his trial of strength with the Dominican, and without further delay he commenced operations.

"If I may be allowed to put a question of the kind," he said to Oriz, "is your interview with the Duke on a subject of private or public importance?"

"I hardly know, my brother, how to answer your question," said Oriz, after a moment's hesitation. "Pray be more explicit."

"My sole reason for inquiring," said Pelletario, "is, that if it were upon a subject solely of public interest connected with the Holy Office, without anything confidential being mixed with it, I thought perhaps I might be able to assist you with information."

"Many thanks for the offer," said Oriz. "It is in connection with the affairs of the Holy Office that I have requested this interview with his Highness. But, candidly, no inconsiderable portion of it is of a kind which, at first at any rate, should only meet the private ear of the Duke. At the same time, understand me, I shall, in the interests of our holy cause, be most grateful to you for any information you may give me."

"The subject on which I was about to speak to you," said Pelletario, "is one which not only regards the Holy Office, but his Highness as well. At the same time it is one of much delicacy. I should have taken upon myself to inform his Highness of it, and had called at the palace this morning

for that purpose, but as the Duke at the time was busily engaged I did not disturb him. On mature reflection, as the subject is a somewhat painful one, and coming perfectly within the duties of the Holy Office, I thought it perhaps might be better to confide it to you, that you might be the first person to inform his Highness of it."

"Anything I can do to serve his Highness, or be of use to our holy cause, I will readily attempt," said Oriz. "Might I ask to what you allude?"

Pelletario remained silent for a moment, as if hardly daring to communicate a secret of such importance even to the Inquisitor himself. At length he said, "You will hardly believe, reverend brother, what I am about to communicate to you, though at the same time I assure you solemnly it is a fact. That misguided man and arch-heretic, Bernardino Ochino, is at this moment in Ferrara, and a guest of her Highness the Duchess."

As Pelletario spoke this, he glanced furtively at his companion, anxious to notice the effect so weighty a communication would make on him; but not the slightest surprise or emotion was visible on the countenance of the Dominican.

"My dear brother," he replied to Pelletario, "of that fact I am well aware, and it is one of the reasons which has induced me to demand an interview with his Highness this morning."

Although the countenance of Oriz had remained impassive when Pelletario communicated to him the intelligence, not so the features of the Jesuit on hearing the Dominican's reply. The idea seemed to cross his mind whether it was not possible that the Dominican intended to profit by the discovery he (Pelletario) had made. To assure himself on this point he said to Oriz—

"Your means of obtaining information are wonderful. I should hardly have thought the organization of the Holy Office so perfect as it appears to be. Might I ask if you are aware how long Ochino has been in Ferrara?"

"Only two or three days," said Oriz. "Short, however, as the time has been, he has already held a prayer-meeting in the palace of the Duchess, which was attended by many of the heads of the schismatics."

"Do you know in what manner he contrived to enter the city?" inquired Pelletario.

"I think," said Oriz, "you were not in the refectory before the meeting when the General of the Capuchins narrated to us the adventures of an old man, who introduced into the city late at night a stranger clad in the frock of a Friar of their order?"

"I was not," said Pelletario.

"Because that disguised Capuchin Friar was no other than Ochino."

"Pardon me," said Pelletario, "but are you quite sure your information is correct? Ochino does not wear the frock of his old order, but is dressed more in the style of a professor of the University."

"Of that I am also aware," said Oriz; "still the information of the old man was perfectly correct.

The dress he now wears is one belonging to the Judge Biagio Rosetti, and the frock, the cowl, and cord in which he was disguised when he entered Ferrara, as well as the sandals he wore, are now concealed in a chest in one of the rooms in the house of the Judge."

Pelletario now made no attempt to conceal the expression of astonishment on his features at the extraordinary minuteness of the information Oriz had received. The Inquisitor, with something distantly approaching an expression of triumph on his countenance, glanced at the astonishment stamped on the features of his companion.

"But, my brother," he continued, "all things are ordered for the best; and that wicked man will now be caught in the trap which he himself has laid, and another enemy of our Church will be crushed at the very moment when he considers himself in the most perfect security."

Oriz had turned his glance from his companion's face when he made this remark, or he might have perceived that the expression of astonishment had vanished from Pelletario's countenance, and a peculiar sardonic smile occupied its place. The Jesuit said nothing, and his companion continued—

"But are there any other points you wish to communicate to me prior to my interview with his Highness? Allow me first to say that I much admire your discretion in placing the duty of communicating the intelligence to the Duke on an humble officer of the Holy Inquisition. At the same time," he continued, with something like patronage in his tone, "be assured, as soon as the first burst of indignation which naturally will arise in the mind of his Highness has somewhat subsided, I will not fail to inform him of the energy and discretion you have shown in the matter. Truly, the Duke is to be congratulated on having chosen a confessor of so much tact and experience."

The conversation continued a few minutes longer, until they reached the drawbridge, which was immediately lowered to allow them to enter; and they passed into the great hall till the major-domo should arrive to inform them his Highness was in readiness to receive them. Little animation did Pelletario show in his tone and manner, and on being asked by Oriz if he had any further communication to make, the Jesuit told him he had not, and then added, with something like bitterness in his tone, "At least, none which I am certain is not in your possession already." Then, quitting his companion, he seemed apparently to watch the efforts of some workmen who were then occupied in terminating the repairs in that portion of the Este Palace.

At length the major-domo entered the hall, and informed the two monks that his Highness was ready to receive them; and they followed him into his presence, where they were received by the Duke with equal kindness and amiability.

"I hear you called at the castle this morning to see me," he said to Pelletario; "I regret you did not allow the major-domo to tell me you were here.

I wanted to inform you that it is my intention to leave the castle for Belriguardo this afternoon, and I much wish you to accompany me. I trust you will be able to do so, although the notice is of the shortest."

"I shall have much pleasure in obeying the commands of your Highness," said Pelletario with great satisfaction in his tone, for the idea at the moment had occurred to him, that he would have ample

leisure when with the Duke to neutralise any ascendancy Oriz might have gained over his illustrious penitent's mind. "I will be at your service at any time you may appoint."

"I propose leaving in about an hour," said the Duke, "and I have already given orders that your mule should be in readiness for you. Will you be able to accompany me at so short a notice?"

"Certainly, your Highness," said Pelletario. "I



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will take my leave of you then for the present, unless you have any further orders to give me."

"You can do so," said the Duke, "if you have nothing more you wish now to say to me. If you have, I am at your service, otherwise the Reverend Father Oriz wishes for some private conversation with me."

"I will interrupt your Highness no longer," said Pelletario. "In an hour's time I will be ready at the castle for your departure;" and then bowing

with great humility, both to the Duke and the Dominican, the Jesuit left the apartments.

As soon as the Duke and the Dominican were alone, the former asked him if he had seen the Duchess.

"I had an interview with her Highness yesterday afternoon," said Oriz, "but I cannot say I met with much success. However, I do not despair, but trust I shall yet be able to bring the illustrious lady back again into the fold. I have known those who

have resisted the Holy Office quite as energetically as she has done brought back again, and afterwards remain among the most exemplary and obedient of its children."

"I fear," said the Duke, "you will have more trouble than you anticipate. Unfortunately, heretical opinions have been engrafted upon the mind of my wife by men of such ability, and so deeply have they taken hold, that there will be much difficulty in removing them."

"With assistance from your Highness," said Oriz, calmly, "or even with your passive permission and no active intervention on your part, I am fully persuaded I shall be able to effect the conversion of the Duchess, provided you will allow me to carry out to the letter the instructions I have received from his Majesty the King of France."

"I would willingly do much to meet the views of my illustrious relative," said the Duke, "but much as I grieve at the heretical opinions entertained by her Highness, I cannot forget she is my wife."

"Still, might I suggest to your Highness," said Oriz, "that the letter of his Majesty is worthy the gravest consideration. He can be prompted only by the interest he takes in the welfare of the souls of his illustrious aunt and her amiable children. He naturally feels the danger the young Princesses are in by residing under the same roof with a mother afflicted with Protestant principles, and with a heretic companion, fearing that her children, following such example, might have their minds also perverted from the pure doctrines of the true Church."

"Reverend Father," said Duke Ercole, somewhat impatiently, "let us clearly understand each other. It is my wish to show profound respect to your mission, but, ample as its scope may be, it has yet its limits. True, my daughters have remained under the care of their mother, but it has been with the express understanding that their religion shall not be tampered with; and, to do her justice, the Duchess has kept as faithfully to her agreement as she did in the case of my eldest daughter, the Princess Anna, at present Duchess of Guise, than whom, I think you will admit, a more sincere Catholic is not to be found in the whole of Europe. And what greater danger will the Princesses Lucrezia and Eleanora run by the companionship of the young girl Teresa Rosetti than did the Princess Anna from the companionship and society of the talented Olympia Morato? I presume you allude to that young girl when you speak of the possibility of the religious principles of my daughters being contaminated, as, I am informed by the Father Pelletario, they have no other Protestant acquaintance."

"Without admitting that the companionship of a heretic young girl is unattended with danger to the minds of the Princesses, I beg to inform your Highness that there is at this moment dwelling under the same roof with them, and receiving hospitality at the hands of the Duchess (although as yet, I admit, the Princesses have not made his acquaintance), one of the most dreaded enemies of

our holy religion. I mean the ex-General of the Capuchins, Bernardino Ochino."

It would be difficult to describe the astonishment and rage of the Duke at these words. It was some time before he could collect his thoughts sufficiently to reply.

"Father," he said at last, "you must be mistaken. The miscreant could never have had the courage to present himself in Ferrara, nor dare the Duchess receive him. You must have been misled by your informants. No, it is impossible a thing of the kind should have taken place without Pelletario being aware of it."

"The reverend brother Pelletario was only aware of the fact yesterday evening, after his return with your Highness from Belriguardo, and Ochino has not been in the palace more than two or three days. I should state that the Jesuit Father, immediately he knew of it, had resolved to inform your Highness, but on second thoughts considered it more the duty of the Holy Office to take up the matter, and requested me to give you the information. Although Ochino has been but three days in the palace, he has had sufficient time to collect within its walls, to what he calls a prayer-meeting, many of the principal heretics in Ferrara, and after their mock service was over, many subjects were spoken of, especially by a young Swiss from Geneva, which showed but little respect to your Highness and the laws."

"Reverend Father," said Ercole, after a moment's silence, "you completely overwhelm me. In your hands I now leave the management of the Duchess, under the perfect understanding that her personal safety shall be respected. Beyond that, do as you may think right."

"But pardon me, your Highness," said Oriz determinedly, "I must decline moving in the matter unless I am allowed the full authority proposed in my letter of instructions from his Majesty. Permit me again to read a portion of them."

The Duke having acquiesced, Oriz drew from his pocket his letter of instructions, and commenced reading—"If after such remonstrances and persuasions of *Notre Maître Oriz* to make her know the truth, and the difference there is between light and darkness, it shall appear that he is unable by gentle means to gain her and to reclaim her, he shall take counsel with the said Lord Duke as to what can possibly be done in the way of rigour and severity to bring her to reason.' And again it continues—'His Majesty wills and approves, and indeed prays and exhorts the said Duke, that he would cause the said lady to be put in a place secluded from society and conversation, where she may henceforth injure no one but herself, taking from her her own children.' By this your Highness must perceive that it is the opinion of his Majesty, the King of France, that measures of great severity should be taken with his illustrious aunt, to bring her to a better frame of mind, even though that can only be effected by the application of the torture."

"I do not like the use of that word," said

Ercole. "Wicked and objectionable as the behaviour of her Highness has been, she is still my wife, and the mother of my children."

"I can easily imagine that the application of the torture must be repugnant to the feelings of your Highness, but bear in mind that the dearer the illustrious Duchess may be to you, the greater interest you should take in her soul; and the pain you may feel in allowing her to be submitted to the torture, will be repaid to you hereafter in an eternity of happiness. Nor is a case of the kind without precedent. Elevated as the position of her Highness undoubtedly is, others in equally high positions have been submitted by their relatives, and of the closest consanguinity, to discipline of the kind, and that to the great good of their souls."

The Duke remained silent for some moments, and then said—

"But am I to understand that his Majesty the King of France advises me to put the discipline to be applied to the Duchess entirely into your hands without my right to interfere?"

"Pardon me," said Oriz; "I hardly said so. While his Majesty advises strong measures to be adopted as well as severe punishment, he directs me to consult with your Highness as to the mode of its application, in order to avoid greater notoriety than is requisite for the interests of the Church."

"I am pleased to hear you say so," said the Duke, "as now I think a perfect understanding may exist between us. I will leave the punishment of the whole of the heretic members of the court of her Highness without restriction in your hands, to

do with them as in your wisdom may seem best. With the Duchess herself you have full permission to take any steps you may consider advisable, with any punishment short of the torture or death. Neither the rack nor any other personal chastisement shall be used in the case of her Highness, and in this you must admit, on your own authority, I am fully acting up to the instructions you have received."

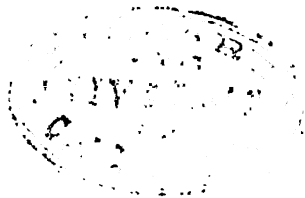
"Then am I to understand that I have your full authority to act in the matter as I may think fit, with the exception of the reservation you have made?"

"Fully and unreservedly," said the Duke. "And that it may not be imagined, even in the most indirect manner, that I attempt to control you or look with coldness on your efforts, in less than an hour I will leave Ferrara for my hunting-palace at Belriguardo, where I will remain for some days."

Then advancing to the door the Duke ordered the major-domo who was in the hall to send the captain of the guards, and a few moments afterwards that functionary made his appearance.

"I am about to leave Ferrara," he said to him, "for some days. During my absence you will obey all commands the Reverend Dr. Oriz may give you, no matter on what subject, as implicitly and unhesitatingly as you would obey me personally. I give no further order, that there may be no mistake, and remember I shall hold you answerable that every assistance he may require from you is strictly afforded him under the penalty of my severe displeasure."

So saying, the Duke saluted the Dominican and the Captain of the Guard, and abruptly quitted the room.



CHAPTER XII.—EVENTS FORESHADOWED.



LITTLE sleep was enjoyed by Renée or her two lady attendants on the night on which Bernardino Ochino left the Palace of San Francisco to ask for shelter and protection from the Judge Biagio Rossetti. Early the next morning the Duchess summoned Madonna Ponte and

Teresa to a small cabinet adjoining her chamber. When they met anxiety and alarm were visible on the faces of the three. After the door of the cabinet had been closed, Renée asked Teresa if she had received any news from her father of the safe arrival of Ochino at his house.

"I have heard nothing whatever, your Highness," said Teresa.

"Is it possible," said Renée, "that a messenger may have been sent, and you not hear of it? Had you not better make inquiry of the porter?"

"I will do so, your Highness," said Teresa, "but I am sure it will be fruitless. No messenger would arrive at the principal entrance, and since daybreak I have myself been on the watch at the head of the staircase leading to the postern door, and no one has applied there."

A silence of some minutes now ensued, which was broken by the Duchess saying,—

"I hope no accident has occurred to the worthy pastor. May Heaven protect him."

Their morning meal was now brought to the room, but none of them had any appetite, and after it had remained on the table for some time, it was taken away untouched. The three now sat quietly together, glancing frequently at one another as if seeking for aid and encouragement which no one was able to give. The most self-possessed among them was undoubtedly the Duchess; still, even she seemed to be labouring under that peculiar sensation which occasionally comes over us all when in undefined danger, that a terrible misfortune is about to occur, though no one can exactly tell where it may fall, or the hand that may strike the blow. More than an hour passed in silence, and though Madonna Ponte had seated herself at the embroi-

dery frame—that occupation so much encouraged by the Princesses of the house of Este—after a few stitches, which seemed to have been made completely at hazard, she gave up the attempt, and pushing the frame from her, crossed her hands before her and remained as silent and unoccupied as the Duchess and Teresa. Renée was the first to break silence.

"My child," she said to Teresa, "bring hither my Bible. It ill befits us in our present state to remain helplessly absorbed in our own languor. Weak women as we may be, we have the power to apply to One who is stronger than all. Let us offer up a prayer to God for protection, as well as aid and comfort for the fugitive, as well as for our persecuted brethren in the city."

Then opening the Bible which had been placed before her on the table, and Teresa having placed a footstool for her to kneel upon, Renée read with a calm, clear voice, such portions of Scripture as she considered most applicable to their present position; and when she had concluded she offered up a short but touching prayer for comfort and support.

On the Duchess again resuming her chair, a singular change appeared to have taken place in her mind and in those of her two attendants. The expression of anxiety and alarm which had hitherto been plainly visible on their countenances now subsided, and they began to converse reasonably on their present position.

"It is impossible we can disguise from ourselves," said Renée, "the fact that some terrible misfortune is awaiting us. What it may be, none of us can tell, but one thing we have in our power, and that is, to bow with resignation to whatever God's will may be. Still, earnestly do I long to know what has befallen the pastor Ochino—whether he has succeeded in quitting the city, or has found in it some secure place of shelter. Go, Teresa, my child, and make inquiries whether any one has arrived at the Palace with a message from your father."

Teresa left the room as she was ordered, and shortly afterwards returned with the intelligence that no messenger had called.

Possibly of the three ladies Teresa felt most disappointed by the non-arrival of the messenger from her father's house. Though hardly admitting the idea to herself, she had expected that Camille Gurdon would call; and although she probably would not have admitted to herself that she bore any love for the handsome young Swiss yet a proof of it might have been drawn from the fact that, now there was the impression of coming danger over her, her thoughts dwelt more on him than they had hitherto done. After her return to the Duchess she sat for some time in a gloomy mood. Fortunately the Duchess was too much occupied with her own thoughts to notice her, and after a short

time the young girl entered again fully into the subject uppermost in the minds of the others.

Hour after hour passed, and still no messenger came from the Judge. A sort of irritable feeling now seemed gradually to come over Renée and her companions as they sat silent and motionless. Still no sound was heard, and the same silence which existed in the cabinet of the Duchess seemed to have been communicated to the officials of her household, and they moved about the Palace on their several duties, silent and speechless as spectres.

The bell was now heard ringing for midday mass, and shortly after footsteps approached the cabinet. Simultaneously the Duchess and her companions glanced anxiously towards the door of the room, as if expecting some communication. The door opened, but the person who entered was only the major-domo of the Palace (himself a Protestant), who came to inform her Highness that dinner—the principal meal of the day—was in readiness. Renée was on the point of giving a somewhat impatient answer, when, glancing at the major-domo, she perceived on his countenance the same expression of depression mixed with resignation that she had noticed during the morning on the faces of her two lady attendants.

"Carlo," she said kindly to him, "I shall not leave this room. Send up some slight refreshment to us here, and that will be sufficient."

The man bowed and quitted the room, which he shortly afterwards re-entered, followed by two servants carrying some refreshments. These they placed upon the table, and then at the order of the Duchess retired from her presence. Seating themselves at the table, the ladies now made some slight attempt to eat, which they did with their minds so completely absorbed in other matters, that when their repast was over, had they been questioned what viands had been set before them, they positively would not have been able to say.

Two hours more passed without any messenger arriving from the Judge; and it was now time for the daily visit of the Princesses Lucrezia and Eleanora to their mother. Possibly with the idea of changing the terrible depression, the Duchess requested Teresa to go to the apartments of the Princesses and inform them she was ready to receive them. Teresa immediately went on her mission. On her way she passed one of the upper female servants employed about the persons of the Princesses.

She spoke civilly to her, but to her great surprise the woman, instead of answering with the unwilling civility she was in the habit of showing, merely drew herself up, and after casting a supercilious glance at Teresa, crossed herself with great devotion and passed on without uttering a word. Greatly puzzled as well as mortified at the servant's behaviour, and fearing that unconsciously she had given her some cause of offence, Teresa was on the point of going after her to ascertain the reason for such behaviour, when she thought it might appear undignified, and she continued her path forwards till she had reached the room in which she was

accustomed to find the Princesses. It was, however, empty, much to her surprise. Thinking possibly she might have arrived too early, she seated herself on a couch to await the entrance of some one of whom she might ask information. After remaining alone some minutes, the servant whom she had met in the corridor entered the room. Although Teresa rose from her seat and advanced towards her, the woman, with the same ill-tempered look, turned from her and was about to leave the apartment. Teresa, determined not to let her depart without receiving some information, asked whether the Princesses would soon be there. Finding she was obliged to reply, the woman told her that the Princesses had left the Palace with Madonna Bonifazio and Sister Laura about half an hour before.

"Do you expect it will be long before they return?" inquired Teresa.

"It is impossible for me to answer your question," said the woman. "All I know is, that about an hour ago they received a message from his Highness, and that shortly afterwards they left the Palace. But I cannot stop longer talking with you," she continued, "for on leaving the Palace Madonna Bonifazio gave us orders that the dresses of the Princesses were to be packed as soon as possible, and we are now engaged in obeying her commands."

"But tell me," said Teresa, now dreadfully alarmed, "if you know whether the Princesses are going to either the Belriguardo or Belfiore Palace?"

"Once more," said the woman, "I can give you no information, nor can I remain longer talking to you." So saying, she left the room.

Teresa, in great alarm, now returned to the Duchess. Noticing the expression of fear on her countenance, Renée asked her if she had received bad news respecting Ochino.

"Worse than that," said Teresa. "Oh! my dear mistress, how shall I tell you the news? His Highness has sent a messenger for the Princesses, and they have left the Palace."

"You do not mean to say," said Renée, now starting from her chair in a state of intense terror, "that they are not to return?"

"I know nothing more, your Highness," said Teresa, the tears streaming down her face as she spoke, "than what I have told you, and that their dresses are being packed up to be sent after them."

Terrible indeed was the effect of Teresa's words upon Renée. She had risen from her chair when Teresa entered the room, but now she sank helplessly back in it, and remained for some moments apparently in a state of unconsciousness. Tears at last came to her relief, and she somewhat recovered herself.

"It is impossible!" she exclaimed, rising from her seat. "They must have deceived you. They can never have taken my children from me. They could not be so cruel!" and then, suddenly changing the expression of her countenance to one of deep anger, she said, "From whom did you receive this tale, and why did you bring it to me when

you must have known it to be false? It is impossible the Duke, my husband, could behave to me with so much cruelty."

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Teresa, "my informant was one of the principal servants attending on the Princesses. She told me she was then engaged, by the orders of Madonna Bonifazio, in packing up their dresses, as they were not to return to the Palace."

"You must have been deceived, child," said Renée, now more mildly, and apparently utterly unable to realise the truth. "They must have deceived you. I will go and question them myself."

"I fear you will hardly obtain much information from the woman," said Teresa, "though she appears to know all."

"I am still a Princess of France and Duchess of Ferrara," said Renée, advancing to the door with great dignity in her manner, "and be obeyed I shall. You, Ponte and Teresa, attend me," she continued, and she left the room followed by the two ladies.

CHAPTER XIII.—THE PROCLAMATION.

ON arriving at the apartments of the Princesses Renée found them empty, and she ordered Teresa to summon the attendants. In a short time Teresa found the woman she had before spoken to and a man-servant, and she informed them the Duchess wished to speak to them. At first the woman demurred with considerable rudeness in her manner, but presently, thinking perhaps she might now have an opportunity of showing disrespect to a heretic Duchess, she consented, and, with the man, followed Teresa into the room.

To Renée's inquiry where were the Princesses, the woman replied that she did not know, and even if she did she was not certain that she should be justified in answering the question without orders.

"Are you aware to whom you are speaking?" said Renée, with great dignity. "Answer me immediately, where are the Princesses?"

"And once more," said the woman, "I refuse to obey you without permission."

"Well," said Renée, "I shall ask you no further question, but I promise you shall be dismissed and punished severely for your impertinence."

"I'm perfectly ready," said the woman, with an air of humility in her countenance. "to suffer in the cause of our Holy Church."

The man-servant, however, who had hitherto been silent, probably thinking that he might have been included in Renée's threat, and calculating that although her Highness was then in disfavour, the time might soon come when she would again resume her power, corroborated the scanty information given to Renée by the woman, assuring her that neither he nor any of the servants knew more of the matter.

For some time Renée seemed to be in doubt, and questioned the man further, but at last came to the conclusion he was speaking the truth, and, without saying more, beckoned to her attendants, and then left the room to proceed to her own apartments. On entering, the courage which had

hitherto sustained her completely vanished. Throwing herself on a couch, and burying her face in her hands, she burst into a violent flood of tears.

"May Heaven protect me, and grant me strength and resignation, for my sorrows are more than I can bear!" exclaimed the unhappy Duchess. "The world seems to have abandoned me. My own husband has turned against me, and my children have forsaken me."

"But hope that Heaven will still assist your Highness, and be not cast down," said Madonna Ponte. "You have no reason to conclude that the Princesses will not again return to the Palace."

"I tell you there is no hope," said Renée passionately. "Did you not hear the woman say that even now the whole of their clothes are being packed to be sent after them, and would that be the case if there was the slightest probability of their return? No, there is no hope. I shall never see them again."

"But surely, Madam," urged Madonna Ponte, "that cannot be. The laws would never allow them to be completely separated from you, even if they were not allowed to reside with you in the Palace. Why not apply to the law for protection?"

"And to whom can I apply?" said Renée, rising to an erect position on her couch. "And who would plead my cause? Is there a man in the whole city in whom I could confide without the chance of being betrayed?"

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Teresa, "I am sure my father may be trusted."

"True, my good girl, I had forgotten him. Pardon me, for my sorrows make me almost distracted. But your father, faithful as he has been to me and our holy cause, has, I fear, no power left—nay, more, will soon be among the number of the persecuted."

"Still, of that your Highness is not yet certain," said Teresa. "Why not send to him and request him to wait on you? He may yet be able to give you good advice."

Renée for some moments remained silent, evidently turning over in her mind Teresa's suggestion.

"Possibly, my child," she at length said, "you may be right, and your worthy father may still be able to advise me. But what messenger can I send to him who would not betray me?"

"If your Highness will allow me, and Madonna Ponte will accompany me, I will take your message myself. If I find him, you may be certain he will return with me."

"Go, my child, if you have courage, but return as quickly as you can, for I shall feel desolate indeed without you both, and shall count the minutes till you come back. Be careful that no one knows the object of your mission."

Madonna Ponte and Teresa now left the Duchess and made preparations for their visit to the Judge. To prevent observation they folded their black silk *candales** over their heads in such a manner as to

* The *candale* was a favourite article of dress among the Ferrarese and Venetian women of all classes, and remained in fashion for more than two centuries. It was fastened in some manner to the waist, and then thrown over the head, covering, if the wearer wished, a portion or the whole of the features. It was as powerful a weapon in the

leave as little as possible of their features exposed to view; and stealthily creeping down the stairs leading to the postern at the back of the Palace, they emerged into the street.

They pursued their way without inconvenience, till near the angle of the Via del Pioipponi, in which the Judge, Biagio Rosetti, resided, when they were for some minutes obliged to take shelter under a doorway to allow a troop of horse to pass, arrayed in their gorgeous uniforms, one side red, the other white (the Ducal colours), with hats adorned with white flowing plumes, and the captain of the guards at their head. They were followed by a carriage surmounted by silken hangings of the same colours, in which were seated two men who appeared to be ecclesiastics, but who, from the curtains being drawn, were hardly visible to the crowd that surrounded it.* As soon as the soldiers had passed, Teresa and her companion pursued their way to the house of the Judge, which they reached without difficulty, but found closed. After waiting for some time, and using in vain every means to make themselves heard, Teresa concluded that her father must be at the Palace of Justice, and being unwilling to return to the Duchess without fully accomplishing their mission, she and Madonna Ponte resolved to repair to the Court, hoping to find some one who would inform the Judge that they wished to speak with him. On arriving at the Palace of Justice they were again doomed to be disappointed. Not only was it closed, but they were informed that no causes had been heard that day.

They were now greatly embarrassed what further steps to take. Teresa, in her anxiety, would willingly have set aside all maiden consideration, and proposed to her companion that they should repair to the lodging of Camille Gurdon, and inquire of him whether he had heard any intelligence of her father and Ochino; but unfortunately she did not know his address.

Thoroughly dispirited, they now determined to return to the Palace, but their attention was attracted by a crowd who advanced across the Piazza, accompanying a herald who was preceded by two mace-bearers, and followed by a body of soldiers of the municipal guard. On arriving at the Palace, the herald and trumpeter quitted their escort, and, entering the Palace, shortly after made their appearance on a small balcony, known as the Ringiero, opening on to the Piazza, and from which all *gride* or proclamations of importance were first promulgated.

The two mace-bearers having taken their place below, and the escort of the municipal guard having placed themselves around them to keep off the crowd, who, anticipating from the unusual amount of ceremony observed, that some proclamation of

interest was about to be issued, had congregated in great numbers. The interest felt by the crowd had, notwithstanding their anxieties, communicated itself to Teresa and Madame Ponte, and, drawing their candales closer over their faces, they stood under the arcades in a position where they could be but little seen, to hear the edict the herald was about to pronounce. After the trumpeter had given a flourish on his instrument so as to call the attention of the hearers, and the mace-bearers had ordered all to be silent, the herald proceeded to unroll a scroll of parchment he held in his hand. Then advancing to the extreme end of the balcony, he read the somewhat lengthy proclamation he had been intrusted with.

The edict stated that, inasmuch as his Highness the Duke being aware that heresy had taken deep root in his dominions, thereby causing the great anger of Heaven, and wishing that all his subjects should live in a pious and Christian manner after the faith of the Holy Catholic Church, had determined to put the axe to the root of the evil, so that the schism should no longer exist in his dominions, nor the anger of Heaven be occasioned by any laxity of his government. The edict then went on to state that his Majesty the King of France had, in the great interest he bore to the subjects of the Duke and their spiritual welfare, sent to assist in the good work the Reverend Father Oriz, Chief Inquisitor of France, into whose hands for the future the supreme jurisdiction of all matters relating to heresy in the city and Duchy of Ferrara would be implicitly placed; and that his authority would, in all subjects appertaining to heresy, be the same as that of his Highness himself. The herald next proceeded to say that the Reverend Father Oriz having received information that divers persons attached to the Court of her Highness the Duchess Renée were grievously infected with heresy, as well as many of the leading persons in the city, he, by the authority in him placed, commanded all good Catholics and citizens to give information to the Holy Office, so that they whose names here follow may be arrested and given into the custody of the Holy Office, that their cases may be inquired into, and punishment inflicted on those who remained obstinate in their wickedness. And furthermore, that all good Catholics were permitted on their own authority to arrest, or, in case of resistance, to beat, maltreat, or even slay the herein-after named heretics, without thereby incurring any punishment either from the Holy Office or the civil authorities.

Then followed the names of twenty-four individuals, male and female, directly or indirectly attached to the Court of her Highness, as well as several persons of eminence in the city; and, to their intense terror, Teresa and Madonna Ponte recognised their own names, as well as that of the Judge Biagio Rosetti.

For some moments the two women remained so completely horror-stricken as to be unable to move from the spot on which they were standing. Teresa

hands of a coquette as a fan with the Spanish ladies. Boeno in his dictionary of the Venetian dialect speaks of it with great enthusiasm, as hiding blemishes in the ill-favoured, and setting off the charms of the handsome to still greater advantage. "Il che dare il potere veramente magico di abbellire le brutte, e di far vie maggiormente spiccare le attrattive delle belle."

* The carriage or carretta of the time was an open vehicle more or less ornamented, with posts at the corners connected at the top by rails, from which hung curtains which could be drawn or left open at the fancy of the occupants.

was the first to collect her senses, and leading her companion away by the arm, and whispering to her to draw her candale closer over her face so that they might not be recognised, they entered a narrow street in a direction exactly opposite to that of the Palace of San Francesco. Finding herself clear of the crowd, Teresa was on the point of stopping to take into consideration what step they had better adopt, when she noticed a respectably dressed woman apparently watching her and Madonna Ponte. Fearing discovery, Teresa again drew her almost helpless companion onwards—helpless from the state of extreme terror she was in—and was walking rapidly forward, when she heard the footsteps of some one swiftly following them. She again hastened her steps, but the person following soon overtook them, and Teresa, by a frightened side-glance, perceived that it was the woman she had before noticed. She now made room for her to pass, but the woman approaching closely to the side of the trembling girl, whispered in her ear, clearly and distinctly, in the Italian language—

“Be strong and of good courage; fear not, neither be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee, He will not fail thee nor forsake thee.”

Teresa regarded the woman with astonishment, not unmixed with anxiety. She felt that she was actuated by a friendly feeling; and she judged by her quoting the Scriptures in her native language that she was a Protestant, but fearing she might be a spy, she made no remark, and the woman continued—

“And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed.”

Both Teresa and Madonna Ponte looked at the woman, and the latter now thought she recognised her as having been formerly a servant of the Duchess, but who had married and quitted the palace several years before.

“Are you a Protestant?” she asked her.

“I was, and am still one in my heart,” replied the woman, “though I have bowed my head in the house of Rimmon. May God forgive me, and look with mercy on me, for I had great temptation. But tell me, did you not hear the proclamation in the Piazza?”

“But too well,” answered Teresa. “Can you help us back to the Palace?”

“It is impossible. If you attempt it, you will be immediately discovered and arrested.”

“Can you shelter us?” asked Ponte. “I will amply recompense you if you do.”

“I dare not,” said the woman. “A priest lodges in my house who would recognise you, and immediately denounce me for sheltering heretics. The only place I know of where you will be safe—and even that is uncertain—is at the house of a poor widow, who resides outside the walls, in the Borgo di Mizzano, near the river. She, I know, would shelter you, but she is blind and poor, and her accommodation is of the smallest.”

“Lead us anywhere you please,” said Ponte, “so that we may be safe for a time, and be able to collect our thoughts. I will pay both you and the poor woman well for your trouble.”

“Follow me, then, at a distance, but do not lose sight of me,” said the stranger. “If we are seen together it may arouse suspicion, and we might all get arrested if you are recognised.”

So saying, she walked on quickly in front, Teresa and Madonna Ponte following at a short distance.

The woman pursued her road onward in a westerly direction till she had passed the city gates, and had come within a short distance of the river. Here she suddenly slackened her pace to allow the others to overtake her. When they came up to her, she said—

“In the small house before us resides the poor widow of whom I spake to you. But I must warn you the accommodation she can offer is of the poorest description.”

“No matter,” said Ponte, “how miserable it may be. And, as I told you before, if she gives us safe shelter, I shall remunerate her handsomely.”

“A little will well content her,” replied the woman. “A zechin would almost last her for a year. Now follow me as before at a distance, and when you see me enter the house remain where you are until I leave it. Take no notice of me, but then enter yourselves, and you will find the poor widow ready to receive you.”

The stranger then quitted them and walked on to the house, which she entered, and shortly afterwards left again. Then making a sign to Teresa that she could advance, she continued her road in a contrary direction, and the two fugitives without hesitation sought the welcome shelter.

CHAPTER XIV.—THE BLIND SAMARITAN.

UNFAVOURABLE as was the description given of the house Teresa and Madonna Ponte were about to seek shelter in, it hardly came up to the reality. It might more properly have been termed an isolated hovel half-way between the city walls and the ferry leading to the Boschetto, of which we shall speak more at length presently. The house was constructed of dried clay mixed with bricks, and roofed with reeds. It consisted of only one room, and a large sort of slip or closet separated from it in the rear. There was no window to the house, light being admitted into the room only by the door; and a small opening in the wall behind afforded a certain amount of ventilation. The inside was not more attractive than the outside. A bed, or rather mattress of some coarse texture, and stuffed with dried rushes, a small dilapidated table, a common wooden stool, one or two earthen cooking utensils of the roughest description, two wooden platters with spoons of the same material, and a horn drinking-mug, with a coarse earthen charcoal-pan in the centre of the room, appeared to comprise the whole of the furniture.

On entering, Teresa and Madonna Ponte found the occupant of the house ready to receive them.

Though aged and blind, her appearance was attractive and prepossessing in the extreme. She was tall, exceedingly pale, with delicate, finely-formed features, and an intelligent expression, notwithstanding her loss of sight. Her grey hair, which was turned back from her face, was collected in a white *cuffia* (a head-dress half-cap, half-bag), and formed a strong contrast to her gown, which was of a dark colour, reaching straight from her throat to her feet, and without any girdle or other confinement at the waist. Leaning with her two hands on a staff which reached higher than her shoulder (for she suffered from lameness as well as from loss of sight), and holding her head erect almost to stiffness, in the manner so frequently observed in blind people, she said, with considerable dignity—

"Enter, ladies; you are welcome to whatever little shelter I can afford you; and fear not, for poor as my home is, you have yet a Protector who can make it a stronger defence than the castle itself. For is it not written, 'The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble?' I have," she continued, "little to offer you beyond shelter, and sacred trust in keeping your secret."

"But, mother," said Ponte in despair, "can you not help us further? for otherwise we shall soon be discovered."

"I will help you in every way in my power," said the woman, "and all other persons suffering for righteousness' sake. But from what you may see around, you may easily judge how little I have in my power."

"Can you not find us a messenger in whom we could trust?" asked Teresa.

"Were my son Gerolamo here," replied the woman, "he would willingly execute any commission for you, and I expect he will shortly return. But first let me hear what is your wish, for he is my only son, and I would not ask him to undertake anything that would bring him into danger."

"All I wish to know," said Teresa, "is whether my father, the Judge Biagio Rosetti, has returned home, and if so, to let him know where we are, and request him immediately to come to us. You could surely have no objection to your son undertaking an errand of this kind, especially as we will remunerate him well for the trouble."

"Willingly shall he assist you," replied the woman, with much animation in her tone, "and on him you can rely. Both of us, I can assure you, would run great risk in aiding a child of the Judge Rosetti, and in this respect you are fortunate in being able to get my son's assistance. In a case like yours every true Catholic would think he was doing God service in betraying you."

"Both you and your son are Protestants, then?" inquired Madonna Ponte.

"I am," said the woman, "and so is my son in heart, though not in name. He hides his real creed from the world, and admits himself a Papist, solely that he may have the power of supporting his mother."

"And have you the courage to admit," said Ponte indignantly, "that you allowed your son to quit the faith that he might be the better able to support you?"

"I would far sooner have perished of starvation or in the dungeons of the Holy Office, than that he should have done so to support me," replied the woman, "if I had had a voice in the matter. You may judge by my age and infirmities that my position in life has not so many charms to make me sacrifice the soul of my only son in order to linger on a few days longer. He did it without my knowledge."

"Then why did you not advise him to follow the example of St. Peter, who after he had denied his Master repented and acknowledged Him again?"

The woman remained silent for a moment, and then said pointedly to Madonna Ponte, "Are you a mother?"

"I have been the mother of four children," said Ponte, "but the Lord has taken them all, and I am childless."

"Then ask yourself the question," said the woman, "were you in my place, with an only son, the last left to you of eight, and whom you loved a thousand times better than life itself, how would you act? Look around you and tell me if anything can render life less attractive than that you see. Poverty and misery are my constant bedfellows; sickness and death stare me in the face. Friends and relatives I have none save that one son. The love I bear him shuts out from me all the misfortunes I have suffered, and the sorrow I am suffering. How then can I advise him to brave the Inquisition and acknowledge himself what they term a relapsed heretic, leaving but a step between him and death by the hand of the executioner? Would you, if you were in my place, advise him to trust himself to the mercy of the Inquisitor? But no, I will not ask you to answer my question. The God of mercy has looked with pity on worse faults than this of mine. You do not know the circumstances connected with our history, or you would not have judged so harshly. But you told me one of you was the daughter of the Judge Biagio Rosetti."

"I am his daughter," said Teresa. "Do you know him, then?"

"Yes, for a God-fearing man, an honest Judge, a friend of the poor, the widow, and the orphan. Do not think me wanting in respect if I ask you to approach me that I may know you better."

Teresa, without hesitation, advanced towards her. The blind woman then letting the staff on which she had leant fall in the hollow of her arm, first placed her left hand on Teresa's shoulder, as if to ascertain the position she was in, and then attempted to pass her right hand over her features. Finding her face covered in great part with the candale she wore, the woman said to her—

"Oblige me by uncovering your face, that I may better know your features, and how far you resemble your father."

Teresa at once threw back the candale from her face, and the woman passed the index and second

finger (those eyes of the blind) over the young girl's face, but so lightly that she would hardly have brushed the pollen from a flower, preserving the while an appearance of deep thought, as if endeavouring to conjure up some reminiscence of the past. Her examination being completed, the woman said to Teresa—

"You strongly resemble your father, my child."

"Are you acquainted with him, then?"

"I have seen him often," said the woman, evading the question, "and have good reason to remember his features. But I hear the footsteps of some one approaching," she continued, detecting through the increased sensibility of hearing, occasioned by the loss of sight, sounds which were inaudible to others. "They are doubtless my son's, and he will willingly go on the errand you require."

A few moments after the woman had spoken, the door opened. Perplexed as Ponte and Teresa were with the difficulties which surrounded them, they could not refrain from regarding the newcomer with great curiosity, so singular was his appearance. He was about forty years of age, of middle height, with an open intelligent countenance. The dress he wore, however, was singular in the extreme. Over a leather *guippone*, somewhat resembling a doublet, he wore a coarse black garment, in shape like a herald's tabard. On this was painted, both back and front, a white cross, reaching from the throat to the black leather belt at his waist. On his head he wore a black hood, without any mark or device on it, which fell over his shoulders, and was fastened by a strap under his chin. His legs were encased in strong, dark-coloured, knitted trousers, which fitted closely and covered his feet like a stocking. A coarse piece of untanned leather protected the sole of the foot, and was fastened to the instep and ankles with straps somewhat like those of sandals. In his right hand he carried a bell, and in his left a small banner made of coarse black cloth, on the centre of which was painted, in white, a death's head, and on each side of it the crest of the municipal arms of Ferrara. The man seemed greatly surprised at seeing two ladies in his mother's house, but by no means abashed. First placing the bell on the table, and then taking off his black hood, he kissed his mother, and, turning to the ladies, said—

"Pardon me, ladies, for appearing before you in this costume, but uninviting as it may appear, I had no little difficulty in obtaining the privilege to wear it. Mother," he continued, turning to the old woman, and speaking in a tone of bitter sarcasm, "I have this day received the honour of being appointed banner-carrier to the *Beccamorte** of the parish of Mizzano, and have not only been instructed in my duties, but have received my uniform, which I now wear." Then, scarcely in an audible whisper, he added, "Fortunate for you perhaps that you cannot see it."

* A name given in derision to persons employed by the municipality during the visitation of the plague.

"What duties have you to perform, my son?"

"They are few and simple in the extreme," he replied. "I have only to walk before the mortuary-cart with my banner in one hand and ringing a bell with the other, to warn people to bring out their dead or sick."

"Is the plague then in Ferrara?" inquired Ponte.

"The doctors have reported, Eccellenza, that two cases have occurred already, and the Government has ordered the Lazaretto on the Boschetto Island, on the opposite side of the river, to be prepared to receive the plague-stricken, should any other cases occur. For the future, mother, my residence will be there till all danger has subsided."

The old woman sighed when she heard the sad duties her son had to perform.

"There are strange changes in this world, my son," she said; "but it is better to earn bread at any honest occupation, than remain involuntarily idle, and eat that of charity. But," she continued, "these ladies, who hold the Reformed faith as taught by the pious Professor John Calvin, having heard the proclamation to-day which denounced them and many others as heretics, have been brought here by one to whom we owe much, for us to give them shelter and assistance."

"And we do not ask you to assist us gratuitously," said Madonna Ponte, "we will amply recompense you for any assistance you may render us."

"Any assistance I can give you is at your service, ladies," he replied, with a courtesy of manner strangely inconsistent with the humble office he held. "It must be understood, however, that I am not required to do anything contrary to the law. Not that in your case I should personally have much compunction in outstepping it a little, but there is another life depending on mine, which I am most unwilling to place in any danger."

The old woman easily understood.

"And grateful indeed am I to Heaven, my son, for the love you bear me," said the old woman; "but think not of me in this instance. These ladies," she continued, noticing the embarrassed silence maintained by Ponte and Teresa, in reply to her son's remark, "these ladies are attendants on the Duchess Renée, and one of them is a daughter of the Judge Biagio Rossetti."

"I am under too much obligation to the Judge not to willingly assist his daughter in any way in my power," was the man's answer. "Once more, ladies, what can I do to serve you?"

"I wish you," said Teresa, "to go to my father's house on the Via del Piopponi, and inquire if he is within, and bring him back with you if possible. Should he be unable to come at once, ask him to follow you as quickly as he can. If you are not able to find him, ascertain, if possible, from any of the neighbours if they know the address of Camille Gurdon, a Swiss lawyer, and a great friend of my father's. Should you obtain it, call on him and ask him to come to my assistance."

"I will, and with pleasure," said Gerolamo; "but first let me take off this livery, or I shall find it



"THE MAN SEEMED GREATLY SURPRISED AT SEEING TWO LADIES."

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difficult to obtain an answer from any one I may speak to." So saying, he took off his tabard, and after placing that and his cap, with the banner and belt, in a corner of the hut, he left, promising to return as soon as possible.

It took less than ten minutes for Gerolamo to arrive at the corner of the Via del Piopponi; indeed, so rapidly had he run, that he was completely out of breath. He now slackened his pace, examining the houses as he passed, being uncertain which was the one where the Judge lived. Then seeing a crowd of people gathered round a gateway, he advanced to make inquiries. He found them in a state of great excitement, pressing forward

towards the entrance, while several men of the municipal guards endeavoured to keep them back, partly with entreaties and partly by force, occasionally letting the but-end of their halberds fall somewhat severely on the toes of the most advanced of the mob. The excitement and curiosity which actuated the crowd for a moment communicated itself to Gerolamo, and he also pressed forward, though with but little success. He was on the point of asking what was going on, when an old man beside him placed one hand on his shoulder, and the other on that of another bystander, and leaped upwards so that he might be able to see over the heads of the crowd.



"I can see nothing," said the old man, as he took his hand from Gerolamo's shoulder. "But no matter, they will bring him out presently."

"Who is it you are looking for?"

"For the heretic Judge Biagio Rosetti. Don't you know he was denounced as a pig of a Calvinist in the proclamation to-day?"

"Yes," said Gerolamo, "I heard that. Is this his house, then?"

"Yes, it is, and I hope he is in it," replied the old man, who was no other than Carlo Pedretti, introduced to the reader in the first chapter as the guide of Ochino on the evening he entered the city in the disguise of a Capuchin Friar. "I hope he is in the house," the old man continued, "for it

would give me immense satisfaction to see him carried off prisoner. But no matter if they don't find him now, the Holy Office are at his heels, and he will be cunning indeed if he escape them."

"He seems to be no favourite of yours," said Gerolamo.

"Favourite of mine!" exclaimed the old man. "No, indeed! I hate him as much as the arch fiend hates holy water. Did not he order a relative of mine to be flogged and imprisoned because he took something from a Jew? No wonder, indeed! A heretic himself, he naturally took the part of the Jew against the Christian. But he'll have his reward for it now. His day has come at last."

CHAPTER XV.—GEROLAMO'S QUEST.



MOVEMENT now took place in the crowd to allow some persons leaving the house to pass through. Gerolamo and the old man retired to the other side of the street, and the latter stood on a large stone by one of the houses to be better able to see what was going forward. Presently two

of the municipal guard with an official of the Holy Office, clad in his white robe and large black cape, and carrying a number of books and papers, came from the house. Shortly afterwards the gates were closed, two of the soldiers remaining outside to prevent any one from entering.

"No luck," said the old man to an ill-looking acquaintance who then approached him, "no luck. The heretic has escaped, but his hour-glass has nearly run itself out. But whither away so fast, old friend?" he continued. "We have not met for many a long day."

"I cannot stay," said the other, "for I want to see what's going forward at the Palace of San Francesco. They say it is surrounded by the soldiers of the Duke's guard, and that the Duchess and all her heretic attendants are to be arrested and conveyed to the prisons of the Holy Office."

"The Duchess to be arrested?" said Pedretti. "That is indeed good news. Wait one minute, old friend," he continued, descending from the stone on which he had been standing, "wait a moment, and I will go with you."

"And I will go also," said Gerolamo. "This will be a sight worth seeing." And the three then started off together.

"If this is really true," said Pedretti, "it will indeed be a glorious day for the Church. If the Duchess and her followers are taken, it will be some compensation for the escape of the Judge."

"No matter, he will soon be taken," said the other, "and glad indeed shall I be when I hear it. I have never forgiven him for allowing that horrible witch Marta Curioni to escape. That proves what a heretic he is in his heart."

"I don't remember her case," said Gerolamo,

wishing to appear on friendly terms with his companions.

"Not heard of it!" said the other. "Why a more infamous act of treason to our Church was never perpetrated."

Pedretti and the other man, passing a little chapel at the angle of the street, before which a lamp was burning, here crossed themselves devoutly.

"But you did not cross yourself," said the man, "when you passed the chapel of the Holy Saint Sebastiano." (Here he crossed himself again) "Are you a heretic?"

"I?" said Gerolamo. "No, indeed! I was listening anxiously to what you were about to say, and I did not see the chapel. *Mia culpa*. I will not fail to mention my fault when next I go to confession. But proceed with your tale."

"Well, then, my cousin Beppo had a sister who kept a wine-shop near the gate of the castle Fedaldo. As she was a widow with a family of children, she could not pay the business as much attention as it required, and besides that, she sometimes had very difficult customers to deal with, whom none but a man could manage. Then again she had naturally a great disgust for the trade, and would have given it up, only she had nothing else to live by. Fortunately for her, however, her brother not only knew the trade well, but liked it. He was just the man for it, being a tall powerful fellow, about forty years of age, strong as a bull, and brave as a lion. He was a capital tempered fellow, too, and was as fond of a glass as any of his customers. In fact, it's very likely the quantity he drank made a great hole in the profits, but as the business had increased vastly since he had the management of it, the loss he occasioned was more than compensated for by the great increase of customers he drew to the house. Beppo, you should understand, did not live at the wine-shop, but, after business, used to go back to his own house about a quarter of a mile off, where he had a wife and two children, and, I must add, it very often took him pretty well an hour to reach it, in consequence, as he said, of a weakness he had in his legs. Well, near Beppo there lived an old woman that everybody said was a witch, because she was always grumbling and talking to herself. Now this old woman had taken a great dislike to Beppo for being what she called a drunkard, and Beppo had taken as great a dislike to her for her impertinence.

"One morning—Beppo having returned home late the night before, and certainly intoxicated—the old woman saw him as he was going to the wine-shop, and muttering something to him which he could not hear, she raised the staff she leant upon and shook it in his face. Beppo, who was out of humour that morning, went up to her and said, 'What are you shaking your crutch at me for, you old hag? If you don't mind what you're about, I will get all the boys in the Borgo and we'll make a bonfire of you. You

ought to have been burnt long ago for a witch as you are.' The old woman now got into a great passion, and shook her staff at him, and told him she would be revenged on him, old woman as she was. She'd soon put a stop to his impertinence.

"Well, although Beppo snapped his fingers at her threat, he felt an uneasy feeling come over him, which increased as he went on. In fact, so painful did it become, that when he had got to the wine-shop he was obliged to fill a horn mug with the strongest wine he could get, and drink it off to strengthen himself. Although it did good at the time, the effects soon wore off, and he was obliged to take some more. Strange enough, he could not shake off the old woman's threat, though he was a bold man generally, and he felt she was working him some evil. Well, after drinking on for some time, he couldn't get rid of the feeling, and he called his sister, and told her he wanted her to look after the shop, as he didn't feel well, and was going home. She asked what was the matter with him, and he said he felt as if he was bewitched, and that the old woman who lived opposite to him had done it. Bidding some friends who were drinking 'good-bye,' he left the house, but before he had reached half the distance home he fell senseless on the ground. Fortunately a man was passing at the time who knew him, and he carried him to his house and placed him on his bed.

"And now a change came over him. From being quite silent and helpless, he struck out in a red flush all over, his face swelled, and the perspiration poured off it. Then he began to talk in a wild manner and start up in bed, and to beg his wife and others to protect him from the rats that were in his room running about, chasing each other sometimes down the side of the room, sometimes over the bed, and even across his face. Of course his wife and friends, after being very much puzzled to know what was the matter with him, now became dreadfully frightened. That the rats were in the room and galloping about, as he said, was certain, for he saw them, and there could be no doubt that he spoke the truth, for the terror and alarm on his face proved it. At last somebody said he was evidently bewitched. They had heard the old woman, Marta Curioni, in the morning threaten to be revenged, and no doubt she had bewitched him.

"They now sent for a priest to exorcise the evil spirit. He came, and at first didn't do much good, but gradually Beppo got quieter, and at last died as easy as if he'd been going to sleep."

"Well," said Carlo Pedretti, "I've heard the thing mentioned before, but not the particulars. If ever there was a case of witchcraft, that was one."

"So every one thought, and the old woman was seized and brought up before the Judge Rosetti. The witnesses were called, who proved everything as I told you, but the Judge wouldn't believe the old woman guilty, and released her."

"Ah! that wouldn't have occurred in the pre-

sent day," said Pedretti. "The Holy Office is properly managed now. Father Oriz is at its head, and he's a very different man from Father Fabrizio. Witchcraft would no longer be left to the Judges to punish; the Holy Office will take that under its management."

They had now arrived at the street leading to the Palace of San Francesco, when their passage was stopped by some soldiers of the guard, who would not allow any persons to enter the street, giving short and uncivil answers to those who questioned them on the subject. Finding a crowd had collected at the entrance to the street, Gerolamo asked if it would be possible to reach the Palace by any other way. He received for answer that it would be impossible, every approach being blocked up by the military, and no one was allowed to pass. He now inquired why the thoroughfare was stopped, and was informed that the Holy Office had taken possession of the Palace, and that many of its inmates had already been removed to prison. It was also reported that the Duchess Renée would be arrested. Whether this was true or no, they could not say. Certainly she had not yet left the Palace.

The words had hardly escaped the man's lips when a stir was observable in the crowd, and a carretta (the same spoken of in the last chapter) was seen approaching, surrounded by many horsemen, who drove the crowd as far away from the carriage as possible. Who were its occupants it was impossible to say, for the curtains were closely drawn. The carriage and escort now took the road which led to the castle, and the crowd attempted to follow, in hope of seeing who were its occupants. But in this they were disappointed, for the mounted soldiers now formed a line across the street, and prohibited any one from following, while other soldiers proceeded to drive away those few who had managed to pass the line.

Gerolamo, having now quitted his companions, made another attempt to reach the Palace of San Francesco. This time he was more successful, but he found it surrounded by soldiers, who, the moment any one stopped and cast a glance at the building, immediately ordered them to walk on. Gerolamo again attempted to enter into conversation with one of the soldiers, but he merely received a surly reply, implying that he had better mind his own business, and not ask impertinent questions, or it would be the worse for him.

Perceiving it would be useless to make any further attempt to gain information at the Palace, Gerolamo returned to the Via del Pionponi, intending to make another effort to enter the house of the Judge. When he arrived at it, however, he found the door closed, and two sullen-looking sentinels standing before it. He now made some inquiries of different inhabitants of the street as to whether they could inform him where a Swiss lawyer of the name of Camille Gurdon resided. The answers, however, were of the most unsatisfactory description. No one knew him, or had ever heard of his name, and Gerolamo had now

no other course to adopt than to return, after a fruitless errand, to his mother's house.

On entering the door both Teresa and Madonna Ponte rushed to receive him, and hear what intelligence he had brought. He narrated calmly the particulars of his unsatisfactory mission. He told them that though the Judge had fortunately escaped, yet his house had been ransacked by the officers of the Holy Inquisition, the doors closed, and sentinels placed over it. He had endeavoured to reach the Palace of San Francesco, but had been impeded by the soldiers. He had, however, learnt that all the attendants of her Highness had already been arrested and carried to prison, and he had every reason to believe the Duchess was also removed from the Palace. He had certainly seen a carriage surrounded by soldiers, and evidently guarded with great caution, which was supposed to contain the Duchess, but the curtains were so completely closed it was impossible to see who was inside, nor could he tell its destination, as no one was allowed to follow it.

Teresa asked if he had inquired for Camille Gurdon. Gerolamo replied that he had, but was unable to obtain any information whatever respecting him. In fact, no one seemed to know him.

Teresa and Madonna Ponte now completely sank under the terrible intelligence they had received. It was, however, a great satisfaction to Teresa to hear her father had escaped, but Ponte fairly cried aloud, exclaiming, "We are lost, and have no one to help us!"

It was now the old blind woman's turn to remonstrate with Ponte. She said to her, "Be not cast down, nor give up hope, for it is unwomanly. It would be much better for you to pray to the Lord for help. Remember his words spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.'"

Although the words of the poor woman might have had some effect in calming the sorrow of Teresa, they fell unheard on the ear of Madonna Ponte.

"You had better put off attempts at consolation, mother," said Gerolamo, "till the first burst of grief is over. You must now think for a moment on more common-place subjects. What provision do you intend making for these ladies for the night?"

"What provision can I make?" said the old woman. "I have not a soldi to purchase necessities, and there is nothing but bread in the house."

Teresa heard the woman's remark. Placing her hand in her pocket, she drew from it her purse, and gave Gerolamo a gold ducat, requesting him to get whatever he thought necessary. Having received from his mother a list of things that would be required, he again left the house, and returned to it shortly afterwards, bringing with him the purchases he had made.

Arrangements were now completed for passing

the night, which was rapidly advancing. Teresa and Madonna Ponte were to occupy the bed in the front room, and the old woman that in the slip behind it. All being in readiness, Gerolamo again put on his lugubrious uniform, and, taking up the bell and banner, kissed his mother, and, wishing the ladies good night, quitted the house. Proceeding to the ferry, he crossed over to the quarters which had been assigned to the Beccamorte in the Lazaretto.

CHAPTER XVI.—GIACOMO THE FERRYMAN.

ALTHOUGH Ochino, when he quitted the Palace of San Francesco in the evening after his interview with Pelletario, contrived to arrive at the house of the Judge without difficulty, on more than one occasion he imagined he was watched by spies. Whether he had any good reason for the suspicion it would be impossible to say, for no one spoke to him or offered him the slightest interruption; still he thought he saw several who appeared to be watching him with great attention, and one even seemed to follow him pertinaciously for some distance. When Ochino had arrived at the corner of the Via del Pioppi, in which Rosetti's house was situated, he stopped for a moment to consider whether it would not be prudent to take a more circuitous road before entering, so as to throw the person who was following, should he be a spy, off the scent. Before deciding, however, he cast a glance behind him, to ascertain whether the man had also halted, but no one was to be seen, and so suddenly had he disappeared, that the idea crossed Ochino's mind that he must have concealed himself in the doorway of a house, or behind some projection. So fully was he convinced that this was the case, that he retraced his steps for some distance, but without being able to find any one; not a soul could he see, and the streets appeared utterly deserted.

His mind now more at ease, Ochino returned toward the Via del Pioppi, and reached the house of the Judge fully convinced that no one was watching him. Having carefully felt his way up the dark staircase as far as the first-floor, he tapped softly at the door to avoid arousing the attention of any other inmates of the house. He forgot at the moment that Rosetti had informed him, that he was in the habit of sending his servants to their homes in the evening, so as to be able to receive the visit of a friend without any one being aware of it. The Judge understood too well the machinations of the Inquisition not to know that the house of every Protestant of any standing in Ferrara had a spy especially appointed to watch it.

Ochino waited for some time, anxiously hoping to hear the footsteps of some one approaching to open the door, but no one came. He now knocked louder, but without better success. Again and again he knocked, and each time louder than before, but no answer came. He was now fairly puzzled what steps to take, whether to remain on the stairs all night or make another attempt to get

the door opened, when he heard the footsteps of some one moving inside the apartment. A moment afterwards the little wicket, which, in common with most Italian houses of the day, was incased in the principal door, was opened.

"Who is there?" inquired Rosetti, for it was he who had opened the wicket. From having left his lamp in the sitting-room, he could not distinguish Ochino's features.

"It is I, my brother—Bernardino Ochino. I have been obliged to leave the Palace, and am come to ask you for shelter and protection."

The Judge made no answer, but without hesitation opened the door, and, taking Ochino by the hand, drew him in, closing the entrance door softly after them. Leading him into the sitting-room, Rosetti, for the first time, spoke to him.

"Welcome, my brother, in any case," he said, "but it would have been greater happiness for me to have received you in any other character than that of a fugitive. But tell me what untoward circumstance has occurred to oblige you to leave the Palace? I flattered myself that you were there, at least, in perfect safety."

"And I was of the same opinion yesterday, my friend," said Ochino; "but circumstances have since greatly changed for the worse. Not only has Oriz the Inquisitor had a somewhat stormy interview with her Highness, but I myself met the Jesuit Pelletario, who this morning returned from Belriguardo with the Duke."

"But did Pelletario recognise you?"

"He not only recognised me," replied Ochino, "but told me he would infallibly denounce me to the Duke to-morrow; that he would have done so this afternoon, but his Highness had quitted the Este Palace for that of Belriguardo or Belfiore—he did not know which—and would not return till to-morrow."

"The miserable traitor!" said the Judge. "You were formerly intimate with him, were you not?"

"True," said Ochino, "but at the same time I cannot shake off the impression, that although Pelletario threatened to denounce me to-morrow, and I am persuaded will inflexibly keep his promise, his words in some obscure manner seemed to convey a hint or advice to me to quit Ferrara to-night, so that I might escape the clutches of the Inquisitors."

"What did he say then?" inquired the Judge.

"Not one word could I quote that would imply the slightest idea of good feeling towards me, but there was a kind expression on his features and in the tone of his voice which seemed to imply that he wished to convey a friendlier intention than could have been extracted from his speech. And I should also state, that in saying the word *to-morrow*, he placed a peculiar emphasis on it as if he wished me to understand he would take no steps this evening. Altogether I believe his feeling was not unfriendly, though he had ostensibly a duty to perform which he would go through with."

The Judge remained silent for a few moments, and then said:

"My friend, there is no time to be lost. You must leave Ferrara immediately, and I will accompany you till you are out of danger."

"Pray do not think of risking your life," said Ochino. "Your safety is far too valuable to our brethren at this moment, to allow of your imperilling it by accompanying me. I shall trust myself implicitly in God's hands. If it be His will that I should escape, I have little to fear from the wiles of my enemies. If He has ordained, for some good and wise reason which we cannot fathom, that I should fall into their power, I will resign myself submissively to His will. All I shall do is to take the just amount of labour and caution to escape which, since the fall of our first parents, has been imposed on all actions and works of man."

"The danger is not so great for me as you imagine, my friend," said Rosetti. "My intention is to accompany you till you are in a place of safety or under the guidance of some one I can trust, for in these days the fewer who know our secret, the greater the probability of its being kept. For the next three days I shall not sit in Court, and by the fourth I have no doubt I shall have returned."

"But had you not better allow the young Swiss, Camille Gurdon, to be my companion?" asked Ochino.

"I should possibly have done so, but he is not in Ferrara to-night," said Rosetti. "Having charged himself with the duty of procuring the means for your escape, which he proposed should take place to-morrow night, he went to find a boatman in whom he can trust who resides in the neighbourhood of Mal-Albergo. He will not return till to-morrow, when he will call on me early in the morning to inform me what arrangements he has made."

A silence of a few minutes now ensued, which was broken by Ochino asking the Judge what steps he proposed taking.

"I think," replied Rosetti, "the better plan would be to leave the city by the Porta San Giorgio. In the first place, many of our brethren reside in that locality, and among them several of the municipal guard. There will be one advantage in my accompanying you; for by my authority I can prevent any disagreeable questions being asked you by the guard should they meet you. The officers on duty at the gate have now received orders to allow no one, whether priest or layman, to leave the city without permission, or accompanied by some one in authority between the Ave Maria and sunrise, and I shall be able to get the gates opened for you."

"When we have quitted the city, what do you next propose doing?" inquired Ochino.

"We must keep ourselves as much screened from observation as possible till the ferry-boat has crossed the river to bring the peasants who wish to attend market in the town. It is very possible that the man who owns the ferry, Giacomo Zomo, who is a strict member of our faith, will cross with it. If so, I propose returning with him, and sheltering you in his house till we can determine

our plan of action. He is a staunch fellow, and we may trust him without danger. But now, my friend, let me advise you to resume your friar's disguise, unpleasant as it may be to you. You will find it in a chest in the room overhead. Wait one moment till I have lighted a lamp for you." Then placing the lamp, which he had lighted, in Ochino's hand, he continued, "While you are away, I will write two letters; one to Teresa, informing her that I may be absent for two or three days; the other to Camille Gurdon, enclosing my daughter's, and requesting him to convey it safely to her."

When it wanted about two hours of dawn, Biagio Rosetti and Ochino, disguised as a Capuchin friar, quitted the house in the Via del Piopponi, and bent their steps towards the Porta San Giorgio. Although the moon was now sinking, the night was sufficiently clear to allow them to be seen at some distance. They therefore kept as much as possible under the shadows of the houses, and trod lightly so as not to allow themselves to be heard. They proceeded without interruption till they reached the gate of San Giorgio, which, as they had expected, they found closed. The sentinel on duty now challenged them, asking who they were and what they wanted. The Judge answered that he and his friend wished to leave the city, as they were about to undertake a journey, and wanted to start as early as possible.

"There are stricter orders than ever that no one shall be allowed to leave the city till daybreak," said the sentinel, "and so you must remain for the present where you are, or go home again, whichever you like best."

The Judge now advanced a few steps to ascertain if he knew the soldier; but finding that he did not, he inquired the name of the officer on guard. The soldier informed him, and the Judge, to his great satisfaction, not only found he was a Protestant, but one most zealous in the cause. Leaving Ochino standing by the gate, Rosetti entered the guard-house and requested to see the officer. For some time the men he found there refused to call him, as he had thrown himself on his bed to take a little sleep, leaving orders that he was not to be disturbed without good cause. The Judge, however, was imperative. Although unknown even by sight to the men, and unwilling to make himself known to them, there was a certain impressive dignity about him as of one accustomed to be obeyed, and at last they offered no further objection. One of their number left the guard-room, and, entering an inner chamber, called the officer, who, with an expression of some anger in his tone, inquired why he had been disturbed. Before Rosetti had time to answer, the officer continued, "Pardon me, I did not recognise you. What can I do to serve you?"

"I and a friend of mine wish to leave the city. You would greatly oblige me by ordering the gates to be opened. I will be your authority," said Rosetti.

"With much pleasure," said the officer. "I am

sorry to have kept you waiting, but our orders are not to allow any one to enter or leave the city unless they are well known to us, and in a position of authority. Of course in your case there can be no difficulty." So saying he quitted the guard-room with the Judge to order the gates to be opened.

Rosetti now pointed out to the officer the false Capuchin as his companion, whispering in his ear at the time the old Latin proverb, signifying that the "frock did not make the monk." The gates were opened, and the Judge, after thanking the officer for his courtesy, left the city with Ochino.

Once outside the gates, they had to decide what their next step should be. One, however, only presented itself to them, and that was to wander about at some distance from the gates, that they might not be observed, till morning. Heavily indeed did the interval pass with them. They conversed but little, each being absorbed in his own thoughts. At last, to their great satisfaction, they saw on the other side of the river, the first grey beams of morning spreading upwards in the heavens, and their spirits and energies seemed to increase with the light. The Judge now advanced to the river's edge, and kept his gaze fixed on the opposite side, endeavouring to distinguish the ferryman's house. By degrees it became visible, and scarcely had the sun risen above the horizon when he saw a man, whom he recognised as Giacomo the ferryman, advancing towards the river banks, and look towards the spot where they were standing. The Judge immediately made signs for Giacomo to cross, who, however, took no notice of him for some time. Presently a passenger made his appearance on the other side, and Giacomo without delay prepared his boat to ferry him over. Slowly indeed, in the eyes of the Judge and his companion, did the boat appear to advance towards them. At last, when it approached the shore, the Judge went towards it, and as soon as the passenger had landed, he spoke a few words to the ferryman. Sudden indeed was the alteration in Giacomo's manner as soon as he perceived who had addressed him. With great alacrity he now leaped on shore, and respectfully offered his arm to assist Rosetti to enter the boat; and he was about to push from the shore without noticing the Capuchin, when the Judge told him he was his friend, and that he wished him to accompany him. Giacomo looked somewhat surprised, but making no answer he pushed his boat back again so as to allow Ochino to enter it, and then again started for the opposite side of the river. As soon as the boat was sufficiently far from the shore for them not to be overheard, the Judge said to the ferryman—

"I dare say, my friend Giacomo, you are not a little surprised to see me in company with a monk. But my companion now sitting beside me is not one of the order whose dress he wears. He has merely put it on to escape from the city, and indeed from the Duchy, to avoid the death he is threatened with for holding the religious principles we profess. I told him his lie would be safe in your

hands, and he believed me. It is now for you to prove I have spoken only the truth."

"You may be certain, Excellenza," said Giacomo, the expression of discontent which his face had worn since Ochino entered the boat, clearing up as he spoke, "that I would willingly serve any friend of yours, although I admit I was somewhat sorry to see you in company with one I believed to be a monk. Now I know he is one of our faith, and in danger, I have double satisfaction in assisting him. May I know who your friend is, or does he wish to remain unknown? In either case I am at his service."

"I cannot do more to prove the reliance I have in your good faith," said Rosetti, "than candidly to inform you who he is, for should you ever betray him, your fortune in this world might be considered made. The dress he, as a Protestant, now wears is the same as formerly he wore as a Roman Catholic. He is no other than our pastor and leader Bernardino Ochino, of whom I know you have heard. A price is set on his head, and he is now leaving Ferrara to escape to Venice, where he expects to find some friends who will assist him in establishing a mission and re-uge in Zurich for those of his countrymen in Italy who are obliged to quit their native land for conscience' sake."

As soon as Giacomo was aware who his illustrious passenger was, he first drew in his oars, and then rising from his seat, he took off his hood (which in common with other boatmen of the river he habitually wore) with his left hand, and taking Ochino's in his right, kissed it respectfully.

"I am but a rude man," he said to Ochino, as he resumed his seat, "and hardly know how to express myself in terms I would willingly use. I should like to tell you in a proper manner how great is my pleasure in being able to serve you, and how the certainty of death itself shall not make me desert you, but I am unable to do so in the language I should like to make use of. Now tell me candidly in what way can I serve you?" and then, re-shipping his oars, he again commenced rowing across the stream.

"My friend has explained to you as nearly as possible all I wish," said Ochino. "It is to escape in the quickest manner across the Ferrarese frontiers, that is to say, if by it I am able to reach Venice, for there it is imperatively necessary I should remain for some days."

"That will not be at all difficult," said Giacomo, "and I shall be able to accomplish it, I am fully persuaded, without danger. But we are now approaching the shore, and I see several peasants have already collected, and are waiting to cross the ferry so as to be able to attend the early market. As soon as we land I will conduct you to my house, where you may remain in safety till I have arranged how the ferry-boat work shall be done during the day, as I intend to accompany you myself, that is to say, if you agree to the suggestions I shall presently offer you. But let me give you one word of counsel. When you are in my house do not let my wife or any one else learn who you are, or on what

errand you are bent, and pray do not let it be understood for a moment," he continued, addressing Ochino, "that you are other than you appear to be, whoever may address you or speak to you. My reasons for impressing this upon you I will explain afterwards. Now let us land."

The boat was by this time at the shore, and a crowd of peasants, at least four times the number it would hold, collected round, all eager to enter as soon as the Judge and Ochino had landed. With some difficulty Giacomo got through them, making room for the Judge and Ochino to pass on to his house, and by way of drawing attention from the quality of his two passengers, he addressed somewhat angrily, and in boatman's phraseology, the peasants who were waiting to be rowed over.

"Are you all mad?" he said. "Or do you want to go to purgatory before your time, that a score of you are trying to enter a boat not big enough to hold half a dozen?"

The peasants immediately admitted it was a shame for so many to attempt to crowd a boat, which at most could not hold more than four or five with safety, not counting the luggage and goods they carried with them. But then, as each insisted that he was the first to arrive, and therefore in justice should be ferried over first, the confusion and excitement, to Giacomo's satisfaction, continued without any interference on his part, till he had seen the Judge and his companion enter his house. Then, turning to his customers, he said—

"Hear me one moment, my friends. That boat won't cross the river any more this day. Here comes Pietro, my man—lazy fellow that he is, not to have been here an hour ago—and I shall have him and another, as well as my son, to work the larger boat, which has room enough to accommodate you all. Here Pietro, you lazy dog," he continued, "come here and unmoor the large boat." Then calling to his wife at the top of his voice (a buxom looking dame, who came out of the house the moment she heard her husband wanted her), "come here, will you, and while Carlo" (speaking of his son) "helps Pietro to get the boat ready, I wish you would run to Batista's house and tell him I've got a day's work for him, and will pay him well if he does it to my satisfaction."

"Why should you have him?" said his wife. "Why not work yourself?"

"Because I've got something else to do, which I'll explain to you when I come back. Now, like a good wife, do as I tell you."

His wife now ran off on her errand, and shortly afterwards, one of the passengers offering to assist Pietro and the boy in ferrying the larger boat over the river, Giacomo with great alacrity accepted his services, and in a few minutes the passengers had entered and the boat was pushed from the shore.

Giacomo being now at perfect liberty, returned to the house, where he found Rosetti and Ochino in one of the rooms.

"My wife I have sent on an errand," he said, "and my son with the man are both now employed

in ferrying over a number of passengers, so that all is clear for us to depart. I will get you to wait a few minutes while I collect some provisions to put in the boat, for it is better we should eat our morning meal there, so as to be able to depart before my wife comes back."

"But will you not leave word when she may expect you home again?" said the Judge.

"Better not," said Giacomo sadly, "I might be asked whither I am going, and that I would not even whisper to any but you, for I know not whom to trust, and the very walls about here seem to have ears."

"As you please, my friend," said Rosetti. "We are quite ready to accompany you now. I suppose it is your intention to drop down the river, is it not?"

"It is," said Giacomo. "But where we shall land will be a subject for us to determine on after we have started. I would advise," he continued, sinking his voice to a low whisper, "that we went no farther to-day than the village of Lagoscura, where we will remain the night. I there have a brother who is one of the principal boat-owners on the river, and who is also a staunch Protestant. He is a man of good substance, and far cleverer than I am, and his ability to assist you both with means and advice are greater than are in my power. Besides, there are many others of our faith living there, and we shall be surrounded by friends who will advise us whether it would be better to go direct by land to Venice or drop down the river to Comacchio, and from thence go by sea."

Giacomo then left them, and a few moments afterwards returned with some *salame*, or dried pig's flesh—a favourite article of food with the lower orders of Ferrara—and a loaf of bread. They now left the house together, and made their way to the boat in which they at once took their seats. When they had started, and were dropping swiftly down the stream, Ochino asked Giacomo the reason of the great caution he showed before leaving home.

"Your question," said Giacomo, "is a somewhat difficult and disagreeable one to answer. In the first place it would be impossible for me to point out any particular cause I have for suspicion. I have injured no one, nor, to the best of my knowledge, have I given any one just cause for animosity. Again, all profess for me perfect good-will, yet an uneasy feeling has lately come over me that some evil is impending, that some one is my secret enemy. True, all my neighbours continue openly to treat me with the greatest friendship, but even their kindness of manner appears to be forced, and as if they were concealing something from me, which weighs on my spirits, and makes me sometimes feel very miserable."

"But is not that after all more a fancy than anything else?" said the Judge.

"Pray Heaven that it may be so," said Giacomo. "At the same time it is a dreadful thing to imagine that those in whom we place the greatest reliance, and who, by every tie of friendship and affection, we ought most to depend on, are secretly working against us."

"But you surely do not allude to the members of your own family?" said Ochino.

"Unfortunately I do," replied Giacomo, with much sadness in his tone. "Until lately I never had a thought which my wife did not share, and now I cannot divest myself of the impression that she is secretly my enemy."

"It must be your fancy," said Rosetti.

"I would I could think so, but lately I have found both my wife and son secretly conferring with others, and those always strong Romanists. When I have spoken to them on the subject, they have always found an excuse, evading my questions or not answering them. Others of our faith have also confided to me that the same impression hangs over them, that there are secret enemies among those in whom they trusted, and all Protestants must now look with suspicion, not only on their neighbours, but on members of their own families. That there is some terrible misfortune hanging over the brethren of the Reformed faith, I am fully persuaded. But of that you perhaps are better able to form an opinion than I am."

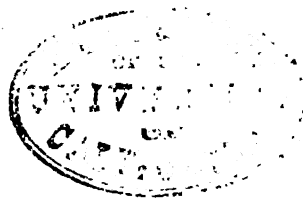
"I would willingly say I differed from you," said Rosetti, "but unfortunately I fear the evil day is close at hand. May God take us into his protection and grant us patience and courage to endure the persecutions which I fear will soon fall on us."

The same style of conversation continued for some time longer, till they had nearly reached Lagoscura, when Giacomo, resting for a moment on his oars, told them that they must now determine in what manner they would land, so as to excite as little observation as possible. He suggested that they should enter with the boat a spot near the river-side, overgrown with tall rushes, in which they could conceal themselves for the moment without difficulty or danger of discovery.

"I will then leave you," he continued, "for a short time, while I proceed to my brother's house, and ascertain whether he is at home, which I devoutly hope may be the case, for if he is absent it may place us in some difficulty. If he is at home, I will return again and conduct you to his house. You need not doubt a hospitable reception, for I can assure you that in all Italy there is not a stronger friend to the Protestant cause than my brother Frederigo. Should he be absent or on a journey, we will then deliberate whether to await his return or drop farther down the river. There is no one else we can trust till we arrive at Comacchio, but there I know a good man, who could not only shelter us, but would take us in one of his own vessels (and he has three) to Venice. But of that we will talk more when I return."

Giacomo now pushed the boat into the rushes till he had reached the shore, where he leaped on it, and, leaving his two companions, started off to his brother's house.

The anxiety of mind under which Biagio Rosetti and Ochino were labouring had the effect of closing their eyes to the unpleasant position in which they had been left by Giacomo. A nearly noon-tide





"THE JUDGE AND FREDERIGO NOW STEPPED ON SHORE."

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sun poured its full rays on their heads, while the rushes which surrounded them impeded a breath of air from reaching them, causing an almost stifling sensation of heat. Fortunately, however, they were detained but a short time. Before half an hour had elapsed, Giacomo returned in company with a well-dressed man, who there was little difficulty in perceiving was his brother, although the newcomer was evidently the senior by some ten years.

Advancing towards the river's edge, he addressed the Judge and Ochino with much courtesy.

"My brother Giacomo," he said to Ochino, "informs me that you have been obliged to quit Ferrara to escape from the hands of the Inquisitors. All the assistance I can render you is freely at your service. My house is yours as long as it may please you to remain in it, and when you wish to leave, I will do all in my power to assist



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you in reaching Venice. I must, however, inform you that you will not be without danger till you have quitted us; for the storm which is bursting over Ferrara must reach us also here. But more of that presently. We must now contrive so that you may reach my house in such manner as to attract as little attention as possible. Fortunately all my men have left me, it being the feast of some saint, and they have taken a half-holiday, so you will avoid any remark from them. If your Excellency will accompany me," he continued, addressing the

Judge, "we will proceed by land; while your companion can go with Giacomo in the boat, and we shall in a few minutes meet again, for my house is close to the river's side. It would seem strange if I were seen talking with one in a friar's frock."

The Judge and Frederigo now stepped on shore, and proceeded together towards the house, which they contrived to reach without meeting any one on the road. A few minutes afterwards they were joined by Ochino and Giacomo.

CHAPTER XVII.—FREDERIGO THE BOAT-BUILDER.



HE village of Lagoscura, though of recent origin, was of considerable importance. Fifty years before the whole district was little better than one continued marsh. But in proportion as the locality became healthier by the draining of the marsh, the prosperity of the village increased.

Houses began to spring up along the banks of the river in place of the miserable hovels which formerly stood there; and a new church of considerable pretensions was built, as well as a convent for the Benedictine nuns, which was afterwards richly endowed.

At the time of our narrative Lagoscura was frequently visited by holiday-makers from Ferrara, attracted by the immense Venetian galleys taken in the celebrated sea-fight which had occurred lower down the river some thirty years before, during the wars of the league of Cambray, when Alfonso, the father of the present Duke, defended himself almost single-handed against the combined attack of the powers of Italy, and defeated them.

The house of Frederigo, Ochino's host, was situated at the entrance to the village. It was of considerable pretensions, and passed as the dwelling of a very flourishing tradesman. It consisted of two wings, the road leading from Ferrara running between them. Of these, the one nearest the river was used for boat-building, and was of considerable extent, for, as his brother had already stated, Frederigo possessed more than one boat, and all of considerable dimensions. In front of this part of the building, piles were driven into the river, and all the boats not in immediate use were moored to them.

Shortly after they had entered the dwelling portion of the house, a fine, sedate-looking young man came in, whom Frederigo introduced as his son, the only surviving member of his family. His wife and two children had been at Ferrara during the last visitation of the plague, and both had succumbed to the pestilence. Frederigo had remained a widower, carefully watching that his son should

be educated in the Protestant faith. He had now grown up, and was as ardent an adherent of the Reformed doctrines as his father.

After they had remained in conversation for a short time, Frederigo and his son, assisted by a staid-looking old woman who acted as servant, prepared the table for their mid-day meal, and that being in readiness, Frederigo allowed her to depart on some errand of her own, saying they could do without her services for a time. Singularly enough, the old woman did not seem to be in any hurry to go, and when she did so, it was only in obedience to her master's order. Shortly after she had disappeared, Ochino questioned his host on the state of the Reformed religion in Lagoscura, assuring him that he had heard there were at one time many adherents of the new faith in the village. Frederigo replied that this had been the case, but that for a considerable time back their numbers had been decreasing. Many of those who had brought up their children in the Reformed faith were grieved to find that they were being tampered with, and, yielding to their tempters, were joining the Romish Church. This Frederigo attributed to the insidious operations of the Inquisition in Ferrara, and to the fact that a party of monks, ten in number, had, a year or two before, taken up their residence in the village. At first they had made no open attempts on the faith of the Protestants, but latterly they had been at no pains to conceal that their object was to bring back the inhabitants of the village to the old religion.

The return of Frederigo's servant from her errand put an end to the conversation; and their meal being over, she commenced removing the things from the table, eyeing the while Ochino, who still wore his friar's dress, with an expression of intense curiosity on her countenance, which by no means escaped the Judge.

They now quitted the dwelling-house, and, crossing the road, proceeded to the empty workshop, where they seated themselves, so that they might enjoy the cool breeze, which at that moment arose from the river. The Judge then took the opportunity to ask Frederigo some particulars respecting the history of the woman who had waited at table.

"I know little of her," was the reply, "beyond that her husband died a good Protestant. The woman herself also professes to be one, and frequently attends our family prayers. I have been, myself, more than once, ready to suspect her of being a spy, and thought of questioning her on the subject; but, alas! were I to prove my suspicions to be correct, I should only be adding one sorrow more to the many I am at present suffering. No, I will say nothing to her. In our house there is little need for a spy. Both my son and I openly avow ourselves to be attached members of the Protestant creed, and as such,

utterly adverse to all the pretensions of the Pope of Rome. This we admit without any hesitation, and, therefore, there would be little use in the Inquisitors setting a spy upon us to discover more. But what induced you to ask me the woman's history?"

"From noticing the hesitation she showed to leave the room when our friend Ochino was about asking a blessing on our meal, as well as from the curious looks she gave him when she returned from her errand."

"I did not observe it," said Frederigo. "But I am very glad you have mentioned it, as I shall now take care she sees as little of him as possible."

"Have you no pastor of the Reformed faith at present in Lagoscuro?" asked Ochino.

"No, none, nor has there been for the last two years," was Frederigo's reply.

"Do you think it would be possible to collect some of your scattered flock together, so that I might address them before my departure?" said Ochino.

"There would be little difficulty in collecting them, but the subject requires grave consideration," replied Frederigo. "A price is set on your head, and among those who hear you might be one who is aware of it, and treason comes easily enough to those who imagine they will receive the blessing of Heaven by practising it. Again, you must determine how long you intend to remain among us. Do not think me inhospitable if I suggest it should be as short a time as possible. Once in Venetian territories, you will be comparatively safe, at any rate from the authorities of Ferrara, as the haughty Republic is too proud of the protection it throws over its citizens, as well as foreigners who fly to it for shelter, to allow them to be seized and taken from it without permission."

"I should propose," said Ochino, "leaving early to-morrow, and should wish to reach Venice by land if possible; but for that purpose I must find a trusty guide, and one well acquainted with the district."

"There will be little difficulty as to that. I am sure my son Paulo will undertake the duty willingly. And he is well adapted for it, not only from the love he bears you and the faith you preach, but from his perfect knowledge of the localities through which you will have to pass. But as to your idea of a meeting of our brethren, we will collect a few—and but a very few—for you to address this evening, and that it will be prudent to do with great secrecy. We had better hold it in the place we are now in, and not meet till after nightfall, so as to avoid observation as much as possible."

Ochino, having expressed his approbation of the arrangement, Frederigo turned to his son and requested him to undertake the duty of inviting their neighbours to the meeting. Paulo with great willingness immediately left the boat-house to start on his father's errand, and the conversation between Frederigo and his guests was carried

on with much interest, till suddenly the sound of many horses' feet, approaching by the road from Ferrara, caught their attention. As the sound came nearer, they thought they could distinguish with the tramp of the horses the clashing of arms, such as is occasioned when a troop of cavalry are in rapid movement. Their curiosity now being fairly excited, they rose from their seats by the river's side and proceeded to the door of the boat-house, which opened on the road, placing themselves in such a position as to be able to see who were the fresh arrivals, Ochino remaining in the rear, so as to be observed as little as possible. Their curiosity was soon gratified, for a few moments only had elapsed before several soldiers of the Ducal Guard in full accoutrements passed at a smart trot. Behind them came a carretta with silken curtains, on which the white eagle, the crest of the House of Este, was embroidered in silver lace. This again was followed by another carretta, in which were seated two men of the Dominican Order; and a body of soldiers brought up the rear.

The cavalcade had hardly passed when an expression of anxiety was to be seen on the faces of the occupants of the boat-house. Short as had been the time while the first carretta was passing the door, and although the curtains were only partially drawn aside, Rosetti was able to see that it contained four ladies, and he felt assured that one of them was no other than Donna Bonifacio, the senior lady in waiting on the Princesses, while another seemed to be dressed in the garb of a nun, and he therefore concluded that the other two ladies were the young Princesses themselves.

The Judge having mentioned this suspicion to his friends, Frederigo left the boat-house, and standing in the road followed the escort with his eyes till at last they appeared to take the direction of the convent. He then returned to the boat-house, and told his companions what he had seen.

"I should much like to know the purport of their visit to the convent," said the Judge. "Surely they cannot have had the heart to separate the Princesses from their mother. If so, it will indeed be a cruel blow. But no, his Highness, whatever his faults may be, and however subordinate he may hitherto have shown himself to the Court of Rome, differs widely in this respect from his illustrious father, and would not listen to any advice to take steps against the Duchess."

"You forget, my friend," said Ochino, "the arrival of the Inquisitor Oriz. That he threatened to deprive her of the society of her children I know, and there is now, I fear, too much reason to believe that he has persuaded his Highness to let him carry out his threat. But have we no means of ascertaining the fact?"

"I would willingly go myself," said Frederigo, "but my making inquiries concerning anything connected with the convent might give rise to the idea that I, in my turn, was playing the spy on the movements of my enemies, and that impression I should be loth to raise in their minds." Then see-

ing the woman whom he employed as a servant standing at the doorway of the dwelling-house, he called to her, and asked if she knew who they were that had just passed the house.

"I do not know," said the woman, glancing furtively at Ochino, who had advanced to within a short distance of where the others were standing, "but I suspect they are ladies of importance, from the guard being with them, and the reverend fathers accompanying them."

"I wish," said Frederigo, "you would ascertain, if possible, who they are, as I should much like to know, and then come back and tell me as soon as you can."

The woman, greatly pleased with her mission, left the boat-house, and the friends again seated themselves by the river's side, conversing on the dangers by which they were surrounded. This continued for more than an hour, when the woman returned to give an account of what she had heard. This time Ochino's curiosity got the better of his prudence, and he advanced with the rest to hear the woman's report. She told them, with a look of evident triumph on her face, which she in vain attempted to conceal, that she had heard that an escort had arrived there with the Princesses Lucrezia and Eleonora, the two chief ladies-in-waiting, and two Dominican fathers; that the Princesses and ladies were to remain at the convent, and the Dominicans were to be lodged with the others who had been for some time resident in Lagoscuro, and the troops were to be billeted on the inhabitants till further orders. Here she stopped short, pressing her lips together as if she had some further intelligence to communicate, but was dubious of the effect it might produce. The Judge, well-accustomed to the reticence of witnesses, easily perceived the woman was concealing something.

"Come," he said to her, good-humouredly, "what you have told us is the truth, I am sure. At the same time, it is not the whole truth, and you have heard more than that, I am certain."

"If you have," said Frederigo, angrily, to the woman, "tell us the whole of it at once. What is all this mystery about? I have no secrets myself, and do not wish my servants to have any either."

"You are my padrone," said the woman, with great readiness, "and have a right to know all if you wish it. Well, then, I also heard that the Duke was angry with the Duchess, and had determined that the Princesses should be separated from her, and never be allowed to see her again—that is to say, unless she become a good Catholic." Here she again stopped short.

"There is more you can tell us yet," said the Judge, who had been watching her attentively.

"Well, then," she continued, this time giving a glance of triumph at Ochino, evidently mistaking him for one of the order whose dress he wore, and expecting he would be pleased with the news she had to tell, "all the Protestants of her Highness's suite have been denounced as heretics, and are now

in the hands of the Fathers of the Holy Inquisition, or at any rate soon will be, and orders have been given that all heresy shall be put down, so that the holy Church may be again triumphant through the whole land."

Terribly did these words tell on the mind of the Judge. He became deadly pale, and had evidently great difficulty to keep himself from falling. "Oh, my child!" he muttered, and then restraining himself, he asked the woman if she had heard who had been arrested.

She told him she had not, and all she knew was that several were in the hands of the Inquisitors, that others had for the moment escaped, but there was little doubt they would soon be captured.

Frederigo, who had been watching the woman sternly for some time, now said to her, "You must leave my house, Margherita, for I suspect you yourself are a Romanist."

The woman drew herself up, and glancing a look of defiance at her master, said to him, "You are right—I am a member of the holy Church. You heretics have had your day, and have had the best of everything in the land, but ours is coming at last. Now you know me, and for the future you may do the work of your own house, or get any heretic woman you please. I have given up the errors of Calvinism, and received absolution for my faults. And now take my advice, the best thing you can do to save yourselves from the hands of the Inquisitors is to follow my example, though why I should give you advice after the drudge you made me while I was as good, or bad, a Protestant as yourself, I know not." So saying, she turned sharply round, and smiling graciously at Ochino, as if she believed he was silently approving her behaviour, she left the boat-house.

As soon as she had disappeared, the Judge seated himself on a bench and burst into tears. Ochino and the two others tried to console him, but in vain.

"My poor child!" he said: "what has become of her? What can I do to help her? Doubtless she is at this moment in the hands of the Inquisition; for how would it be possible for her to have escaped? God grant me fortitude to support my misfortunes, and give me counsel in what manner to avert them! I will at once return to Ferrara, and seek her, let what may be the consequence."

"My friend," said Ochino, "pray calm yourself, and reflect before you take any hasty step. In the first place, you have no proof that the woman's statement is true. You know perfectly well how all popular reports are exaggerated by the last teller, and it is probable that this woman may have said a great deal more than she has heard. Let us wait a little while to hear whether there is any confirmation. If so, do then as you may think fit."

"At the same time," said Giacomo, "I much doubt whether it will be prudent for you to leave here before nightfall, so that you may escape unobserved. It would be better, at any rate, to wait till night, so that we may catch the evening breeze as it comes up the river. I hope that we may reach

Ferrara before daybreak, so that we may not be seen on our arrival. Besides," he continued, "we should gain nothing if we started immediately. We could not arrive in Ferrara till long after Ave Maria, when the gates are closed till dawn."

The Judge saw how reasonable was the advice given him, and he attempted, though uselessly, to calm his anxiety. The time passed wearily enough with all till the sun had begun to sink in the horizon, when Paulo returned. A look of sadness was on the young fellow's countenance, which seemed to confirm before he spoke the intelligence already reported by the servant. He told them that he had heard all the attendants of her Highness had been arrested; but whether the Duchess herself was at liberty, he was unable to say. He also confirmed the report that the Princesses had arrived at the convent. With respect to the immediate object of his mission, he merely said that at nightfall some ten or a dozen members of their community would assemble in the boat-house to meet the reverend pastor, Ochino.

The Judge took no part in the conversation which ensued, being too much absorbed in his own sorrows, and the rest now discussed the best means to be adopted for Ochino's escape. It was evident not a moment was to be lost; but as it was far more probable he would be detected in the daytime than at night, and as, on the whole, nothing would be lost by remaining a few hours longer, it was determined that they should wait with what patience they could summon till after the meeting.

CHAPTER XVIII.—THE WITCH.

LITTLE sleep came to Madonna Ponte and Teresa the first night they passed in the house of the old blind woman. In their arrangements for the night, Madonna Ponte and Teresa occupied the bed in the room which formed the body of the house; while the old woman improvised a bed, or, to speak more correctly, slept on the almost bare floor in the slip bed.

Although neither of the ladies slept, the reason for their wakefulness differed considerably. Madonna Ponte was full of alarm lest she should be discovered, and delivered over to the Inquisition, and earnestly did she pray that Providence would save her from its clutches. Teresa, on the contrary, though naturally alarmed for her own safety, was far less selfish in her sorrow. Her own danger was to a considerable degree hidden from her by the anxiety she felt for two others—her dear father and her illustrious and kind patroness, the Duchess Renée. Of these, the safety of her father occupied the greater portion of her thoughts. Over and over again did she conjure up surmises as to his probable fate. That he was not in the house when the agents of the Inquisition visited it was certain, and this in itself was a source of great consolation to her. Then the idea occurred to her that he might afterwards have returned, and thus fallen into a trap which very probably had been laid for him, and then all

the anxiety which had been somewhat smoothed away by the first reflection returned in double force. She now began to think that possibly Gerolamo, by way of not distressing her more than could be avoided, had deceived her in the account he had given, and that her father was already a prisoner. But, no, she argued, after a moment's consideration: there was too much honesty in his tone and manner to cause her any suspicion—he had evidently told the truth. She then began to conjure up reasons for her father's absence from home at the time of the visit of the Inquisitors. Had he been informed of the danger which awaited him? and if so, by whom? She next remembered the possibility that both her father and Ochino had escaped together; but, then, who could have warned them both of the danger they were in? Simultaneously with its formation, the question was answered in the poor girl's mind—the person to whom she was indebted for her father's safety, as well as Ochino's, was evidently Camille Gurdon. And grateful, indeed, did she feel to him for it; for whatever might have been her doubts before, the nascent affection she bore to the young fellow, which she was hardly yet aware of herself, induced her to believe, with implicit reliance, in the conclusion she had arrived at.

Teresa next thought of the fate of the Duchess. She had always looked upon her Highness as occupying so exalted a position as to be far above the reach of her enemies, whoever they might be. Still she had had experience from the visit of Oriz, that, elevated as her dignity might be, the Duchess was not altogether safe from annoyances, and she could easily perceive these annoyances would be greater in proportion as he gained ascendancy over the mind of the Duke. Her thoughts then again reverted to her father, with whom she now began to assimilate Camille Gurdon, till she felt the certitude—though, as the reader is aware, without the slightest reason to go upon—that they were at that moment in a place of safety.

Early the next morning the old blind woman entered the room, and commenced making preparations for their morning meal with an amount of dexterity which seemed perfectly wonderful, considering the unfortunate calamity under which she was labouring. Uncovering some *braise*, which had been put under some ashes in the little stove in the centre of the room, she placed on it a few pieces of charcoal from a box in the corner, and kindled it with her breath till it was in a glow, and she then placed on it a rude earthen pipkin, containing some milk which had been purchased for them the evening before by Gerolamo. When the milk was thoroughly heated, she took the pipkin from the fire, and placing it and some bread on the little coarse table, invited her guests to their meal. It could hardly be said that either Teresa or Donna Ponte felt much appetite for this repast; their indifference, however, not arising from the homely nature of the food which had been set before them, but from the state of anxiety they were both in. Their hostess,

judging from the short time they were at their meal that they had eaten but little, thought that possibly they did not like the food she had prepared for them, and endeavoured to make excuses for it, begging them to remember the poverty she was in.

"Make no excuses," said Teresa; "on the contrary, we are most grateful to you for the shelter you have given us, but in our present state of anxiety it would be impossible to relish our meal, whatever you might have set before us. Now, tell me, when do you expect your son will arrive?"

"It is impossible for me to say," she replied; "but of this you may be certain, that as soon as he can escape from his duties you will see him."

The conversation then turned on the probable events which had taken place, and what means they had for obtaining information; but argue it as they would, they could arrive at no definite conclusion, nor could the poor old blind woman assist them in the matter. She would willingly have left the house and made inquiries for them herself, but her blindness made it difficult for her to go any distance.

"Other blind people, I am aware," she continued, "have no difficulty in finding their way from one side of the city to the other, but I have not for more than three years ever reached the city gate. The last time I entered it I was received so barbarously that I resolved never again, while God should spare me, to make the attempt."

"Treated you barbarously!" exclaimed Teresa. "What provocation could you possibly have given them?"

"None whatever, my child," said the poor woman; "but when bad passions are up, and prejudices arise in the minds of the ignorant, little provocation is required to raise up persecution." She then remained silent for a moment,—as if evidently wishing to say more, yet keenly feeling how painful was the avowal she was about to make,—and then continued—"But why should I attempt to conceal it from you? for surely you will not credit the absurd accusation. They said I was a witch. I attempted to pass them without notice, feeling my way with my staff, when some one snatched it from me. The crowd which had collected jeered at me, and told me to go on without it. But I could not find my way, for I had become greatly embarrassed. They said it was another proof that I was a witch, and that the staff had been given me by the enemy of mankind, and without it I was powerless. I implored of them to return it to me, when one of them proposed they should try the test of water, and take me outside the gates and throw me into the river. Fortunately, at that moment a priest joined the crowd, who, seeing the treatment I was receiving, pushed boldly forward and told them they were cowards to attack a defenceless old woman in so shameful a manner, and, snatching my staff—the one I now carry—from the fellow who held it, he replaced it in my hand, and then, with a tone of authority, to

which all seemed to bow, he told them to make way for me, and taking me by the arm, led me himself to the city gate, where he requested the soldiers not to allow the crowd to follow me. When we had passed the gate, he said to me, 'Can you find your way now?' I told him I could, and he said, 'Then go in peace,' and left me."

"Did you not feel sorry at being obliged to receive assistance from a priest?" said Ponte.

"I did not," said the woman, "nor do I now. We are taught to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us. What, then, should be our feeling toward those, even of a different faith, who treat us with kindness and love?"

"Do you think the priest knew you?" asked Teresa.

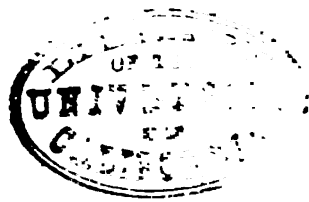
"I have often had that impression," said the woman, "and the manner he quitted me has made the impression still stronger. I was not always in the state of poverty and misery you at present find me in, and formerly I had many acquaintances in Ferrara."

Teresa and Madonna Ponte regarded each other for some time with a look of curiosity as if they would willingly know something more of their hostess. There was a certain plaintiveness in her tone, a correctness in her language, and a dignity in her manner which seemed to prove the truth of her statement that she had formerly been in a far better position in life. The old woman, with that singular intelligence so often found in those labouring under her infirmity, readily guessed their thoughts. She now entered into conversation with them on the subject of her former life, and the circumstances which had occurred to reduce her and her son to the deplorable condition they were then in. She was, she told them, the wife of a physician, formerly of considerable eminence in the city, a Dr. Francesco Cortaldo. Her husband, disgusted with the abuses which had been noticed among the clergy of the Church of Rome, was among the first to turn an ear to those who preached the Reformed doctrines, and, instigated probably at the time by the love she bore her young husband, rather than from being able to reason correctly on the subject, she also adopted the Protestant faith, in which their numerous family of children were educated.

Time passed on, and their family grew up, Geronimo being the eldest of the children. Then followed three other sons, two of whom had perished on the battle-field, and the third had a few years before our narrative been obliged to escape from Ferrara in consequence of his religious opinions, and had not since been heard of. The next child was a girl, and after her three other children, who had all died in infancy. The girl—the idol of her father—was of uncommon beauty and considerable intellect. Naturally froward and vain, these two leading faults in her character were still further developed by the incessant compliments poured into her ear on her great beauty. Both father and mother saw the necessity of keeping a careful watch



"THE CROWD WHICH HAD COLLECTED JEERED AT ME."



over their child; and they had not only to do this, but also to watch the machinations of a certain Count Dedia, who had become deeply enamoured of her, and whose affection she fully returned. Although the young Count was possessed of considerable wealth, ample, in fact, to maintain a wife in his own position in society, he was not able by the laws of Ferrara to marry Angela, as he could not obtain his father's consent. In these circumstances the physician determined that all correspondence should cease between his daughter and the Count. Unfortunately his precaution was useless. The wretched girl, finding marriage was impossible, quitted her father's house, and took up her residence at Count Dedia's. This was a terrible blow to the physician and his wife, and they mourned for their daughter as for one lost to them for ever. The father became so depressed in spirits that he resolved to relinquish his profession, and having saved as much money as would suffice to maintain himself and his wife for the remainder of their lives in comfort, if not in luxury, they removed to the suburbs, so as to be beyond the reach of any reports of their daughter's conduct.

Three years passed in this way, during which the daughter continued to reside with her lover, while her brother Gerolamo had been drafted as a soldier. At length the physician's health gave way, and he began to sink rapidly. He humbly prepared himself for the great change, having but one cause of sorrow—the conduct of his only daughter. One evening, after a succession of fainting fits, he perceived that he had but a few hours to live. Struggling with himself as if he hardly liked to make the avowal, he called his wife to his bedside, and implored her to send at once for Angela, that he might see her again before he died. A messenger was despatched, who found her surrounded by some of the gayest people in Ferrara. She heard with surprise and alarm of her father's dangerous condition. Great and many as had been her faults, they had not succeeded in destroying the love she possessed for her parents. Without mentioning the errand on which she was bound, she called a man-servant to attend her, and then accompanied the messenger to her father's house.

The physician had sufficient consciousness to recognise his child, and although unable to speak, the tears poured down his face, and plainly told the emotion under which he was labouring. Struck with grief at her father's condition, Angela threw herself on her knees beside the bed. Taking his hand in hers, she earnestly implored his forgiveness for her wicked conduct, and promised it should cease. The dying man, unable to answer her, merely pointed his finger to Heaven, and then giving his daughter and wife one last look of love, he appeared to fall into a sleep from which he never awoke.

Angela remained in the house beside the dead body of her father, and when she returned from the funeral, which took place next day, her violent bursts of sorrow suddenly ceased, and with great

calmness and decision she told her mother, that from that moment she intended to give up her evil life. Her mother was only too happy to have her child again restored to her, and the next two days passed over without anything material occurring, except Angela having again embraced the Reformed faith.

On the third day the Count Dedia, who had been absent at his country seat at the time Angela had left the house, returned, and to his great astonishment found she had quitted him. He received from the servant who had accompanied her the address of her father, and he immediately went to the house to find her. He was received by her mother, who told him the change which had come over her daughter, and of her determination to quit the wicked course of life she had been leading, and that she had again embraced the Reformed faith. The Count was greatly astonished at what he heard, and declared he would not leave the house till he had seen Angela. This the widow refused to allow, while the Count insisted on it, till at last the altercation was put a stop to by the entrance of Angela herself. She implored the Count never to attempt to see her again, while he with tears begged her to return to him. Angela remained inflexible, and the Count rushed from the house threatening the widow with his vengeance.

When the news of Angela having quitted his son reached the old Count, it occasioned him no little satisfaction; but when he found that the young man still retained his attachment to the girl, he came to the conclusion that such behaviour was unnatural, and that he must be under the influence of witchcraft. He applied to the head of the Franciscans for assistance and advice, and the monk received him with great sympathy, and listened to his tale with much interest. Without the slightest hesitation he decided that there was witchcraft in the matter, and that it was a fit and proper subject to be brought under the notice of the law. The same evening both Angela and her mother were arrested, and placed in the dungeons of the Palazzo della Ragione. The next day the poor girl was put to the torture to extort from her that she was a Protestant, and had used witchcraft to obtain the power she possessed over the young Count. The first she acknowledged triumphantly, the latter she indignantly denied. Her mother afterwards was put to the torture to induce her to confess that, in conjunction with her daughter, she had been guilty of witchcraft. From some expressions which escaped the poor woman under the torture she was suffering, the suspicion of witchcraft became stronger, and she was a second time subjected to it. She then withdrew the expression she had made use of the first time.

The Superior of the Franciscans now thinking there was sufficient proof against them of witchcraft, they were tried for that crime as well as for heresy. Biagio Rosetti, then a barrister, defended both mother and daughter, and with great ability.

But the Judge decided against them, and the mother was sentenced to have her goods confiscated to the State, and the daughter was sentenced to death.

The confiscation of her goods of course left the poor widow destitute; and it was then that Gerolamo returned from the army to Ferrara to assist in supporting his mother, which he contrived to do with considerable difficulty. After the establishment of the regular Inquisition under the management of the Dominicans, he was arrested on a charge of heresy. Somewhat lax in his religious principles perhaps, from the wild, soldier-like life he had led with the army, and having an intense love for his mother, who was now blind, and had never recovered from the lameness occasioned by the torture to which she was subjected, and who he perceived would die of starvation without his assistance, he, without hesitation, consented to become a member of the Catholic religion, and was immediately afterwards liberated. He then took the hovel in which his mother now lived, and had since contrived to maintain her by whatever little employment he could obtain.

To return to Teresa and Madonna Ponte. During the day nothing occurred worthy of notice, and they remained in a state of great anxiety. Towards evening Gerolamo made his appearance in his official costume. To Ponte's inquiries why he had not called sooner, he said that three cases of the plague had been discovered in Ferrara that day, and he had been too much occupied with his melancholy duties to allow him a moment's leisure. To Teresa's question as to whether he had heard anything of her father, he replied that he had not, the house was still closed, and he could obtain no information of him whatever. The only subject of interest he had to communicate was that he had heard to a certainty that her Highness the Duchess Renée was confined a strict prisoner in the dungeons of the castle, and that no one was allowed to approach her but her gaolers, that her children had been separated from her, and that in all probability she would be tried and punished as a heretic. He added that inquiries were being made for those included in the proclamation who had escaped, and severe punishments were threatened on those who concealed them.

At the receipt of this intelligence Madonna Ponte cast a terrified glance on Teresa, who was too much absorbed in her anxiety respecting the fate of her father to notice it. Not so, however, Gerolamo. He entreated Madonna Ponte not to be alarmed, as come what might he would keep their secret.

"Quite right, my son," said the old woman, "quite right. Whatever we may hitherto have had to blame ourselves with, we have not yet had innocent blood on our hands, and this I say apart from the gratitude I owe the Judge, which will never be extinguished as long as I retain my senses."

"And now, ladies," said Gerolamo, "let me know of what use I can be to you this evening, for I can remain with you but a few minutes longer.

To-morrow I will call on you as early as I possibly can, although I fear that will not be till evening, for, from all I can understand, there are many suspected cases of plague in the city, and we shall have a busy day's work of it."

The widow, finding they had sufficient necessaries in the house to last them for another day, told her son they should require nothing further that evening, and Gerolamo, after advising the ladies not to quit the house nor be seen by any one, bade them good night, and going to the river-side, was ferried over to his quarters in the Lazaretto.

CHAPTER XIX.—THE PLAGUE.

ANOTHER night and the greater part of the following day now passed over the heads of Madonna Ponte and Teresa. Although both acutely felt the painful position in which they were placed, its effects on their minds was of a totally different character. Madonna Ponte, utterly depressed by her misfortune, seemed to have sunk into a sort of terrified lethargy, occasionally waking up to listen to the conversation which from time to time passed between her companion and the blind widow, and then again relapsing into her former state. Teresa, although, as before stated, suffering terribly from distress and anxiety respecting her father, which was still her principal sorrow, was far more self-possessed than her companion. As time wore on, however, her anxiety seemed somewhat to diminish, probably calculating that as she had received no news from him the chances of his escape were the greater; and as hour after hour passed without intelligence of him, the plausibility of her reasoning increased. Indeed, she now began to draw out in her own imagination the probable means by which her father and Ochino had effected their escape. She felt persuaded that when Ochino quitted the palace, and arrived at the house of the Judge, and related to him the occurrences of the day, they had taken immediate steps for their departure. She remembered it had been arranged that Camille Gurdon should engage a boatman to convey Ochino down the river to Commacchio, where he would be able to find means to transfer himself to Venice. She further accounted for her father's absence from his house when the agents of the Inquisition visited it, by the fact that he and Ochino were both concealed in the lodgings of Camille Gurdon. The more the poor girl thought over the subject, the more natural did it appear, and the greater became her good feeling for the young Swiss.

In proportion as Teresa's fears for her father diminished, her anxiety concerning the Duchess increased. And here, it is but fair to Madonna Ponte to state that she appeared, when Teresa could attract her attention, to sympathise with her companion in her anxiety, her love for the Duchess being great, although at the moment it was almost entirely absorbed in her care for her own safety. Although Teresa felt greatly grieved for the indignity which had been offered to the

Duchess, she never for one moment imagined her life to be in danger. She seemed to think it would be utterly impossible for human wickedness to proceed to extremity with a person in so elevated a position as Renée, and from time to time she entered into conversation with the blind widow, and explained her views respecting the Duchess, in all of which she fully agreed.

As evening approached they began to feel exceedingly anxious at the non-appearance of Gerolamo, and questioned their hostess as to the probable cause. The widow replied, that doubtless there had been more cases of the plague that day, and in consequence Gerolamo had been more occupied.

This reason, given considerably at hazard, was a correct one. The well-defined cases of the pestilence which had appeared the day before had aroused the energies of the municipality, and they had that day been occupied in completing the regulations, not only to relieve the plague-stricken, but to prevent the spread of the malady.

It was not before evening had drawn in that Gerolamo made his appearance. He seemed languid and tired, and after depositing his banner and bell in a corner, he seated himself on a stool, and, leaning his head on his hand, remained for some moments silent, and apparently utterly exhausted.

"We have been long and anxiously expecting you, my son," said his mother; "what has happened to detain you?"

"Nothing, mother, to me personally. I am merely tired and out of humour, as well as disgusted with my occupation. I have, however, no alternative, and having accepted it must go through it."

"Is the danger of the pestilence diminishing?" inquired Teresa.

"On the contrary, it is on the increase. The reason we did not leave the Lazaretto before noon arose from the fact that the Signore della Sanita held their meeting there this morning, and discussed, among other things, the duties and powers of the Becca-morti. We had little, however, to learn which we did not know before, but that little was most inconvenient to me, as it keeps me from being as useful as I could wish."

"Surely," said Madonna Ponte, "no one suspects we are here?"

"No one that I know of," said Gerolamo. "The regulation I spoke of does not bear on you ladies in any way. It is simply an order which has been issued for us who are in the employ of the Lazaretto, that if any one shall attempt to enter the city by night or day, except in his official garb, he shall infallibly be hung. It was past noon when we left the Boschetto, and between that time and this I believe there has not been a single street in Ferrara which I have not visited, till my legs tremble under me from fatigue, and my arm aches with perpetually ringing the bell."

"Did you have many fresh cases?" asked Madonna Ponte.

"Several, and bad cases they were. Pray Heaven it may not spread further, or in so, the

effects will be terrible indeed!" said Gerolamo. "I have been told by an old man who used to occupy himself with catching vipers and scorpions, that there are no more to be had, and that they are the only true remedy against the plague."

"My son," said the old widow, "your poor father always ridiculed the idea. I am sorry to hear you entertain it."

"My dear mother, I have no opinion on the subject," was Gerolamo's reply. "I am no doctor. They maintain, however, that it is the only sure remedy, and from them alone the true plague oil (*olio contro peste*) can be made. Dr. Castania gained a large fortune by the sale of it."

"Your father said Castania was little better than a plausible quack, whose sole anxiety was to fill his own pockets, caring but little for his patients."

"Very probably, mother," said Gerolamo. "But let that pass. He received the fruits of his dishonesty last year."

"In what way?"

"I do not exactly know, but it is stated that during the last visitation of the plague, finding vipers were scarce, he adulterated them with earth-worms, and then from the oil he extracted sold it as the genuine *olio contro peste*. Whether it was for that, or some other act of dishonesty, I know not, but he has been banished from Ferrara, and another man supplies his place."

"But who informed you that vipers were no longer to be had?" asked his mother.

"An old man who has lately joined the Becca-morti, and who formerly used to strike the hours in the Rigobello tower. Afterwards he took service under Dr. Castania, and people say he was one of those who assisted in mixing the earth-worms with the vipers, and that he was flogged for it. He wanted to be employed in the Holy Office, I understand, having got a theory of his own that the appearance of the pestilence is due to the Duchess having introduced heresy into the city, and that the only way of gaining the favour of Heaven will be by exterminating all heretics."

"And what do your companions say to his arguments?" asked his mother.

"My companions, mother, have too much work to do at present to pay much attention to his nonsensical remarks. Even if they had more leisure, I doubt whether they would have much effect on them."

"Why not?"

"Because they are hardly men much given to entertain abstruse points of theology. They are, most of them," he continued in a voice of sadness, "poor broken-down creatures like myself, who care but little what befalls them. With perfect indifference they remove the dead and the dying, knowing full well the extreme probability that they may catch the pestilence themselves, and perfectly aware that each moment while doing their duty they carry their lives in their hand."

"Are the sick, then, entrusted to a brutal ignorant set of men who care nothing for them?" inquired Madonna Ponte.

"I should hardly be justified in stating that my companions cared nothing for the sick confided to them, although, doubtless, the scenes of misery they see must to a considerable extent blunt their sense of feeling. At the same time, there are hardly any among them, possibly with the exception of the old man of whom I spoke to you, brutal or naturally hard-hearted. All have a certain amount of intelligence, and most of them, like myself, have seen better days. Another reason, I should state, which has kept me from calling here before, is a certain fear I am under of the old man I named to you. I don't know whether I am prejudiced against him, for certainly I can discover nothing positive, but

he appears incessantly to be watching me. After all, perhaps his eyes are merely attracted towards me from seeing mine perpetually riveted on him. This excuse came several times before me, and I have in vain endeavoured to shake it off. However, fortunately I shall hope to be rid of his society in a couple of days."

"How so?" inquired his mother.

"Because he finds his present work too laborious for him, and has made an application to Dr. Boschi to be allowed to remain as one of the attendants on the sick at the Boschetto, instead of going round with the cart. The doctor told him he must continue his work till he found some one to



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take his place, and as he expects he will be able to do so to-morrow, I shall then have the satisfaction of being rid of him."

The old man alluded to by Gerolamo was no other than Carlo Pedretti, who, before entering on his new avocations, had been out of employment for some days, and had begun to feel somewhat severely the pangs of hunger. It was not, however, without considerable reluctance that he entered into the service of the Lazaretto. He had entertained hopes, after hearing the proclamation, of being employed in some humble and indirect manner by the Holy Office. Scouting the persecution afar off, he imagined they would require a more numerous staff than they at present had. He was already

acquainted with a relative of one of the lay brothers of the Dominican convent, and he applied to him for his patronage. This he obtained, as far as introducing him to the lay brother, who, being by no means prepossessed with Pedretti's appearance, declined speaking in his favour to any of the superior officials. Pedretti, however, was one of those men by no means apt to take an answer in the negative, and he pleaded his cause with so much pertinacity, that at last the lay brother promised that in case he could show that he had it in his power to be useful to the Holy Office he would speak to one of the superior officials in his behalf, but until that proof had been obtained, it would be useless for him to make further application on the subject.

Pedretti humbly thanked the lay brother for the promise he had made him, and then began to turn over in his mind in what manner he could prove his capacity of being of service to the Holy Office. For some time he could hit upon no plan, although he was continually trying to rack his brains for that purpose. At last the idea occurred to him whether he might not be able to show his zeal in the holy cause, and at the same time gratify a private pique of his own. For a long time past, he had entertained considerable animosity against a certain Pietro Zoppo, a lame man, who was employed to strike the hours in the clock over the Rengiero, in the Palace of Justice. Pedretti's animosity against this man arose from several causes. In the first place, he considered that the Rigobello clock tower being the highest in Ferrara, he had the right to give the time to the other bell-strikers. This precedence Pietro refused to admit, and had more than once struck the hours some minutes before Pedretti had done so on the bell of the Rigobello tower. Annoyed at the presumption of his rival, Pedretti the next time resolved to precede him in striking the hour, which he did by some minutes. Pietro easily understood the challenge, and the following hour again was the first to strike, and the result was the creation of considerable scandal, and both men were soundly reprimanded, and threatened with dismissal should it occur again. Another cause for Pedretti's animosity was that, in consequence of the clock in the Rigobello tower having been made to strike by machinery, he lost his employment, while Pietro continued in his, and this was a subject of intense annoyance to him, as he considered Pietro to be more favoured than himself.

It now occurred to Pedretti that if he laid an accusation of heresy against Pietro, he should not only be able to have his revenge upon his old rival, but would probably gain the appointment for himself, and be enabled to re-enter into his original regular habits of life. With this intent, he called on the lay brother, and told him he had very strong reason to believe that Pietro was little better than a heretic. The lay brother questioned him on his reasons for coming to such a conclusion; but Pedretti contradicted himself so flatly, that the lay brother told him he would have nothing more to say to him, and that he might go about his business. Finding that the plague had made its appearance, Pedretti next tried to turn an honest penny by catching vipers; but being unsuccessful, he applied for an appointment in the Becca-morti, and was admitted.

Gerolamo, having somewhat recovered from his fatigue, was now asked by Teresa if he had heard anything of her father. He told her he had not, and that whenever he made any inquiries, which was not very frequent, as people seemed to dislike speaking to him from the dress he wore, he judged by the answers he received that her father was still at liberty, and had most probably made his escape across the Venetian frontiers, as it was not likely a prisoner of his importance would have been arrested

without the news spreading rapidly over the city. He had some idea of being able to obtain more certain information the next day; but he could not promise. He was acquainted with a ferryman, strongly suspected of being a heretic, who knew as much about what was passing in Ferrara as the Podesta himself. Of course, it would be impossible for him to seek this man out, as in doing so he should be obliged to leave his duties; but if chance threw him in his way, or if he had the opportunity of passing near the ferry, he would endeavour to see him, and obtain information on the subject.

Madonna Ponte then inquired if he had heard any news of the Duchess. He replied that he had nothing more to tell them about her. She was still imprisoned in the castle, and beyond that fact nothing was known. A strict guard was placed round the castle, and those who made any inquiry on the subject received so severe a rebuff for their pains, as by no means to encourage others to follow their example.

After a little more conversation, Gerolamo took up his bell and banner, and wishing the ladies good evening, left the house.

The blind widow, soon after her son's departure, brought forth from her scanty stores a small bottle of oil, and with great dexterity, and without spilling a drop, she filled a lamp with it, and then trimming the wick, she lighted it, and placed it on the table. Madonna Ponte now drew a stool beside it, and taking from her pocket a small Protestant book of prayers, commenced reading, while Teresa and the blind widow continued the conversation which had dropped when Gerolamo came in. The widow could hardly agree with Teresa that the imprisonment of the Duchess would so soon terminate.

"If," she said, "it were merely a question between the Duchess and her husband, you might be right, but once in the hands of the Inquisitors, little mercy is likely to be shown her unless she recants."

"Of that," said Teresa, somewhat warmly, "there is no danger. Her Highness is too deeply attached to the Protestant religion ever to change. You do her an injustice; does she not?" she continued, addressing Madonna Ponte.

"I do not know what you are speaking of," said she, raising her eyes from her book, and gazing at Teresa with an anxious pallid countenance.

"I was saying that there was no danger of the Duchess recanting, from any severity the Inquisition might use against her."

"I perfectly agree with you. She would be as little likely to give up the good cause as our leader, John Calvin himself."

Teresa now spoke to her hostess of the probable escape of Ochino and her father. On this subject they were better agreed, both firmly believing that they had reached the Venetian territory, where, for the time at any rate, they would be in safety.

"I devoutly hope it may be so," said Teresa. "My only fear is that if my father hears of the proclamation he will return to save me. I would

rather a thousand times run any danger than that he should imperil his life to aid me."

"Did you not tell me that some one had assisted them in their flight?" asked the blind widow. "If so, he might perhaps return to Ferrara and bring you some intelligence of your father."

"But he will not be able to find me," said Teresa, hesitatingly.

"Do you not know where this person lives? My son could no doubt be able to find some excuse for seeing him."

"I do not know," said Teresa.

"Is he to be depended on?" inquired the widow.

"To be depended on!" exclaimed Teresa, with warmth. "He is as true as the day."

"I did not wish to cast any suspicion on him," said the blind widow, who, fortunately for Teresa, was unable to see the blush that at the moment suffused the girl's face. "In these times it is difficult indeed to know in whom we may trust. What is his name?"

"Camille Gurdon."

"That is not an Italian name. Is he a foreigner?"

"Yes," replied Teresa. "He is a Swiss, and a friend of our respected John Calvin." Then finding the conversation becoming somewhat embarrassing, by way of changing the subject she asked Madonna Ponte, when she had finished reading, to lend her the book, as she had not her own with her.

Madonna Ponte turned her face towards Teresa, who uttered a low cry of alarm at the strange change which had come over it. There was an expression of sickness upon it that proved she must be seriously ill. Her colour was a deadly bluish paleness, and there was a wild haggard expression of the eyes which almost seemed like delirium. She gazed at Teresa for some moments in a bewildered manner. At length she said, "I do not know what is the matter with me, my dear. I feel no pain, and yet I hardly know where I am. I wish you would get me a cup of water, for I feel so faint. I do not think I could stand."

Teresa immediately filled a horn cup with water, which she presented to her friend. Madonna Ponte, instead of taking the cup from Teresa's hand, merely stared at her for a moment in a bewildered manner, and then mechanically placing her book in her pocket, she pushed the water aside and hurriedly rose from her seat. Then staring wildly around her for a moment, she attempted to

move past Teresa, when her strength seemed to fail, and she fell senseless on the floor.

The cry of alarm uttered by Teresa now brought the widow to her assistance, and together, but with much difficulty, they contrived to raise Madonna Ponte from the floor and place her on the bed. Teresa now, under the direction of her hostess, bathed her friend's temples with water, and used the ordinary means to restore animation, but for some time with little good effect. At last circulation was restored, and with it wild delirium set in, and they had great difficulty in restraining her. As night advanced the delirium became stronger, and Teresa, much alarmed, asked what they had better do.

"We have but one course to pursue," replied the widow, "and that is to remain quietly by her till morning."

"Is it not possible to procure assistance?" asked Teresa.

"Quite impossible. The city gates are already closed, and there are none near us who could render any assistance, even if they dared."

"Even if they dared?" said Theresa. "Do you mean to say they would not help a fellow-creature in distress?"

The widow made no reply for a moment, and then said, "I am afraid in this case they would not."

"What then do you consider is the matter with her?"

"Tell me first, has the colour of her face changed?"

"Yes," replied Teresa, "it is now a deep purple."

"Then the Lord have mercy upon us," said the blind widow, "for He alone can save us! I saw too much of the plague the last time it visited this city not to be convinced that the destroying angel has visited us. All we can do is to watch beside your friend till morning, and then when we hear the bell pass the house to apply for assistance."

Teresa was naturally terrified at these words, and Madonna Ponte, being for the moment somewhat calmer, the poor girl threw herself on her knees and earnestly prayed that the life of her friend might be spared, as well as her own and that of the blind widow. Then, after placing herself resignedly in the hands of the Almighty, she rose from her knees, and seating herself beside her companion's bed, she resolved patiently to watch till they could procure assistance the next morning.



CHAPTER XX.—THE LAZZARETTO.



TERESA, during the whole of the night, adhered to her resolution to watch by the bed-side of her plague-stricken friend, her anxiety rendering her totally insensible to the danger she was incurring as well as to the fatigue her duties occasioned her. At times so wild was the delirium of Madonna Ponte

that she had great difficulty in keeping her in bed. Nor in her efforts did Teresa receive much assistance from her hostess, who, although most anxious to help, was, from the nature of her infirmity, almost useless. When day broke Madonna Ponte was comparatively quiet, although the delirium still continued, haunting her with the idea that she was in the power of the Inquisition, and shortly to be tried for heresy. In this state she continued for hours, Teresa watching by her attentively, her love for the patient shutting her eyes to the ghastly spectacle she presented.

As day advanced, Teresa and the blind widow listened anxiously for the bell of the mortuary cart. Not that they had any intention of sending their friend to the Lazzaretto, but that they might get Gerolamo to procure the attendance of a physician when he entered the city. No sound, however, of the bell was heard, and they were beginning to deliberate what steps had better be taken, when the door opened, and Gerolamo, in his official dress, entered. Casting his eyes on the bed, and seeing the condition of Madonna Ponte he understood all in a moment. The plague, in its worst form, had broken out in the hovel.

"My son," said his mother, "when you enter the city, send to our assistance a physician as soon as possible."

"It would be useless," was Gerolamo's answer. "No physician at present will leave the city. Take my advice; and painful as it may be to you, when the cart again passes your house send her to the Lazzaretto. Several reports have reached the Lazzaretto that the plague is rapidly spreading, and we have already as many houses to call at as will suffice for one journey. But when we return we

may call here, or, perhaps, what would be better, I, with a friend in whom I can trust, may come and carry the poor lady down to the ferry-boat. This would be the best plan, for all reasons, as then I need not mention to the others the house she came from, and so there would be no necessity for you to be turned out, or the few goods you have to be destroyed. The young lady could remain with you in safety, and without fear of discovery."

"Nay," said Teresa, "if my friend goes to the Lazzaretto, I will certainly accompany her."

"Pray do not entertain the idea for a moment," said Gerolamo. "By doing so you would incur the greatest danger, not merely of being discovered, but of taking the malady yourself. Take my advice, and remain patiently where you are."

"I will not do so," said Teresa. "If my friend goes I shall accompany her. I am sure if I had been the one plague-stricken, and she had escaped, she would have accompanied me; and cowardly indeed should I be if I forsook her."

"But, remember," said Gerolamo, "you can be of no assistance to her there, even if Dr. Boschi allows you to enter the building, which I very much doubt. But I must not remain longer," he continued, "or I shall be thought to be neglecting my duties. In about two hours I expect to see you again, and then I hope to find you more reasonable."

Gerolamo now left the house, and passing through the gate of the Mizzona, hurried round to meet the cart as it entered the next gate, so that he might be able to lead it through the streets, warning people to avoid it, and summoning those whose houses were visited by the plague to bring out their sick. The duties of the Becca-morti that day were much heavier than those of the previous one. Not only did they call at the houses named in the list which had been sent to them the night before by the city authorities, but at some others where fresh cases had broken out that morning.

After having quitted the city, and when the cart was on its way towards the ferry, Gerolamo placed his bell and banner in the care of the driver. Then whispering to the associate of whom he spoke, he begged him to drop with him a little behind the others while the cart proceeded on its way. When they were out of hearing, he said to his friend—

"Will you come and help me to carry a patient to the ferry-boat? She is in the house you see close by. I want nothing said about it, for it is my mother's house, and I wish her to escape the visit of the Sanita, otherwise all she possesses will be destroyed by their orders, as well as the house itself. She is blind, lame, and helpless, and all she has in the world is little indeed. I wish to preserve it for her, as well as the roof over her head, as long as I can."

His companion readily consented, and the two men now diverged to the house of the blind widow. Gerolamo found Madonna Ponte much in the

same condition as when he left. She seemed almost insensible, and the few words she uttered proved that delirium still continued. No objections were now made either by the widow or Teresa to the removal of the plague-stricken lady; and carefully taking her in their arms, Gerolamo and his friend were proceeding to leave the house when Teresa took up her candale, and prepared to place it over her head.

"You surely cannot be so rash," said Gerolamo, noticing her movements, "as to persist in accompanying your friend. Think for a moment of the danger you are incurring."

"It is no matter what the danger may be," said Teresa; "I will not allow her to go alone, and I intend remaining with her till she gets well again, or till death releases her from her sufferings."

For some moments Gerolamo looked at Teresa attentively, almost doubting whether the delirium which had afflicted her friend had not communicated itself to her, and expecting to see in her face the first symptoms of the malady itself, but the clear complexion and calm resolute eye of the young girl told him that he was fortunately mistaken. He attempted once more to reason with her, but it was of no avail, and he then called his mother to interfere.

"My child," said the widow, "your love for your friend does you great credit, I admit, but although I admire the courage you show, remember that even courage itself may be pushed to a point where it cannot be distinguished from rashness. Be persuaded, and remain with me. You can do your friend no good by accompanying her, and I am sure Gerolamo will take every opportunity of informing you of her condition. Remember, you may be of far greater use to her when she recovers from the malady, if it pleases God to spare her life, than in her present state."

"Mother," said Teresa, "I do not dispute the force of your arguments, but leave my friend I cannot. Say no more to me, I beg, but let me have my own way, unreasonable as it may appear to you. I trust I may soon see you again. If not, accept my thanks for the kindness you have shown us; and may God bless and reward you." So saying, Teresa kissed the widow, and left the house in company with the two men, bearing between them the almost lifeless body of Madonna Ponte.

The conversation which had taken place in the house of the widow almost prevented the *cortège* from reaching the ferry-boat before it started; in fact, the ferry-men had already become somewhat impatient. On their coming up, Carlo Pedretti, who had not yet been able to get a substitute for his duties in the city, so as to allow him to remain permanently in the Lazzaretto, turned a suspicious glance on Gerolamo, and asked in a somewhat authoritative tone of voice where he had found that patient. Gerolamo rather indignantly told him that, as he was the superior of the convoy, he was not bound to answer any questions his subordinates might put to him; although anything

asked by Dr. Boschi, the Signori della Sanità, or their officials, he was quite prepared to answer. Pedretti said it was his duty to report any irregularity; whereupon Gerolamo told him he was in error, and said that as soon as they landed he would submit the question to the doctor himself for decision. Pedretti having already asked a favour of Dr. Boschi, at once saw the folly of getting into trouble with him, and said to Gerolamo, that he did not wish to have any interview with the doctor on the occasion, as it was not a subject of sufficient importance to make a fuss about. But although he no longer addressed Gerolamo, he kept muttering to himself in a vindictive manner, in which the word "upstart" was more than once plainly audible. Gerolamo, however, took no notice of him, but entered the boat, and was about to hand in Teresa, when the padrone, or head ferryman, a good-natured looking middle-aged man, gazing at her attentively (for in her haste she had put on her candale in such a manner as to leave her features plainly visible), said to her—

"Surely, pretty sposina, you are not rash enough to visit the Lazzaretto? Why, my child, you don't know what sort of a place it is, or the sights you'll see there. Are you mad enough, Gerolamo, to take her over?"

"If she would take my advice," said Gerolamo, "she would immediately return home; but girls are obstinate, and it's difficult to persuade them when they are determined to have their own way. Try what effect your arguments will have on her; I will second them willingly."

"I half suspect, my pretty child," said the padrone, "that the best service I can render you would be to cut short all argument and leave you where you are. A man may love his own daughter, but that's no reason why he should let her play with fire when he finds her likely to set herself in a blaze."

Teresa now became dreadfully alarmed at the boatman's threat. Placing her hands together, her beautiful eyes filling with tears as she spoke, she implored him to allow her to accompany Madonna Ponte. The poor woman, she said, who had just been placed in the boat was a dear friend of hers—possibly the only one she had in the world—and she could not bear the idea of leaving her now that a misfortune had befallen her.

"That's all very well," said the padrone; "still common sense ought to prevail on all occasions. But I can't stand those tears, so get in if you will, although your arguments go for nothing with me. I never could bear to see a woman crying, and tears in such eyes as yours I have not the courage to resist, though I must say it goes to my heart to see a pretty girl wilfully seeking her own destruction."

Gerolamo having assisted Teresa into the boat and taken his place beside her, the two ferry-men, with their ghastly freight of healthy, sick, dying, and dead, pushed off from the bank and rowed towards the landing-place of the Boschetto. During their passage, Pedretti, who was

seated on the side of the boat opposite to Teresa, suddenly ceased his muttering, and regarded the young girl with looks of intense interest, as if determined to fix her features in his mind. Although Teresa remained ignorant of the interest she was exciting, not so Gerolamo, who, in his turn, regarded his subordinate with a threatening sternness, which boded no good feeling. So intent, however, was Pedretti in watching Teresa, that he was unaware of the gaze Gerolamo fixed on him. At last Gerolamo could restrain his impatience no longer, and he said to Pedretti—

"Do you know anything of this young lady, that you stare so at her?"

"I'm not sure," said Pedretti, sullenly; "it strikes me I've seen her somewhere before."

"At any rate," said Gerolamo, "you will have little difficulty in knowing her when you see her again. But hark you, my friend," he continued, "there appears to me to be more rudeness than civility in your gaze, and I advise you to turn your eyes another way."

Pedretti was about to answer Gerolamo in the same tone, when Teresa, who had been attracted by the conversation, put a stop to it by drawing her candale carefully over her face, and screening herself from his gaze.

"I don't think we've much to thank you for," said the padrone to Pedretti. "Pretty faces are not so common here that we can afford to lose the sight of one when we have it. If you think your own countenance offers us any compensation, you are greatly mistaken."

Notwithstanding the ghastly nature of their freight, and the deplorable condition of many of their passengers, the other ferrymen and the Beccamorti burst into a fit of laughter at the padrone's attempt at wit, and Pedretti was attacked with satirical jokes on the beauty of his countenance till the boat had reached the landing-place, when the attention of all was called to their duties.

Several assistants of the Lazzaretto now advanced towards them to help them to remove the sick and dead from the boat. The latter were carried off at once to the cemetery, and the former to the hall of the Lazzaretto, where they were examined by the surgeon on duty. At length Madonna Ponte was brought before him, and Teresa entered the hall at the same time. The surgeon had hitherto performed his duties in a mechanical manner, merely giving a glance at the patient to ascertain whether the malady was really the plague, and then, entering the name of the individual in a book which was open before him, he sent the patients to the cells appointed for their reception.

After the surgeon had ascertained that Madonna Ponte was really infected with the plague, he inquired her name and address; and here occurred a terrible cause of alarm for Teresa. Receiving no answer, the surgeon raised his eyes from the book before him, and, perceiving Teresa, placed his pen beside him, inquiring with much interest what could have induced her to visit such a place.

"I came with my friend," stammered Teresa.

"Not many of those who come here have such friends," said the surgeon. "But, my child, this is no place for you. You had better go back again at once."

"Pray let me remain with my friend," said the young girl.

"I have not the power to allow you," he said, "and what is worse, I cannot on my own authority insist on your leaving the island. I must submit the case to Dr. Boschi; but, in the meantime, take my advice and leave this terrible place without delay."

"I would prefer remaining," said Teresa.

"You can do so then, if you please, till I have brought the subject under the notice of the head physician. In the meantime tell me the name and address of your friend."

This was a terrible question indeed for poor Teresa, and she hesitated for some moments before replying.

"Pray tell me her name," continued the surgeon, "that I may enter it in the book."

Teresa now advancing close to him whispered, "Madonna Ponte."

"I did not hear you," said the surgeon, looking up in Teresa's face, on which an expression of great anxiety was apparent. "Tell me again, what did you say?"

Teresa again hesitated, looking at the different assistants in the room. The surgeon instantly caught her idea, that she was afraid of being overheard.

"All of you leave the room," he said in a tone of authority; "and two of you take the patient to her cell," giving the number of it.

Gerolamo and another man instantly went off with Madonna Ponte, while others left the hall by the front door. The surgeon then thinking that he and Teresa were alone, was on the point of repeating his question, when he saw standing at no great distance from them, but in such a position as he would least likely be seen, Carlo Pedretti. Rising from his seat, the surgeon said to Pedretti with a stern voice—

"Did you not hear my orders that all should leave the hall? How dare you disobey me? Come hither, sir, and let me see you, that I may know you again."

Pedretti, now with great alarm depicted on his countenance, obeyed.

"I shall now remember you," said the surgeon, "and do not forget what I say to you. Let me again find you disobeying any orders given you, and your back shall be scourged so severely that the marks will never be obliterated to the day of your death. Now leave the hall at once."

Pedretti immediately left, muttering some excuse about not having heard the order, and the surgeon and Teresa were alone.

"Now tell me, my child," he said to her kindly, "the name of your friend."

"Madonna Ponte," replied Teresa.

The surgeon looked inquisitively in the girl's

face, as if the name was not strange to him, and then said—

“Madonna Ponte? And what is her occupation, and where does she live?”

Teresa looked at him in an imploring manner without making any reply, as if begging him not to press the question. The man of science—who had been watching her attentively, and supposing that she was a member of the upper classes; or perhaps that she and her friend were among the number of those proscribed on account of their religion, now said to her significantly—

“My dear child, I will question you no more on the subject. I can fill in the name and address if I require it. But now to return to your visit here. I have not the power to order you away, but as soon as Dr. Boschi arrives—and I expect him every minute—I shall persuade him to insist on your immediately quitting the island, and that from no other than a friendly feeling towards you. In the meantime, if you persist in remaining, you must promise me that you will not attempt to leave the hall without my permission, otherwise I shall be under the painful necessity of ordering a guard to be placed over you. Let me assure you, every care shall be taken of your friend, quite as much as if you were attending on her yourself. Now give me the promise I require.”

Teresa, finding it was useless to argue further, promised that she would remain quietly in the hall till the head physician arrived. The surgeon then politely placed a seat for her near the window looking towards the river and the city, and recalling his attendants, continued his duty.

For more than an hour Teresa sat at the window impatiently watching for the arrival of Dr. Boschi, and endeavouring, though without success, to settle in her mind the best way of addressing that eminent functionary, so as to produce such an effect on him as would gain her permission to remain with Madonna Ponte. At last she saw several persons arrive at the opposite landing of the ferry, and from the respect shown to one of them, she rightly imagined he was the person whose arrival she awaited with so much anxiety. She watched for some moments the progress of the boat, and then getting impatient at what, in her mind, appeared the tardiness of the rowers, she rose from her seat and went to the door to meet him as he entered. Here she was joined by the surgeon, who said to her—

“You had better remain where you were, for the doctor will probably have some business to attend to before he can speak to you.”

“But,” said Teresa, “it is almost an affair of life or death to me; why can I not speak to him at once?”

“Because the life or death of many will occupy his attention when he enters. Of this you may be certain, that you shall see him and plead your own cause.”

“Will you plead in my favour?” asked Teresa. “I cannot tell you how grateful I shall be if you will.”

“For your own sake I certainly will not. All I can say to you is, that I will not attempt to bias him till you have spoken to him. Now go back to your seat like a sensible girl. Judging from those I see with him, he will have some important instructions to give before he can attend to you.”

Teresa offered no further opposition, but went back to her seat; and in a few minutes after the doctor entered the hall, followed by the persons who had crossed the ferry with him. Had Teresa not been preoccupied with her own sorrow, their appearance might reasonably have excited her curiosity. They seemed all of the same station in life, and had the appearance of respectable burghers. Belonging to a very influential body of men in Ferrara—that of the guild of barbers, they filled a sort of void in the grades of the population of the city, being a class inferior to that composed of the lawyer, physician, or regular surgeon, yet higher than that of the smaller tradesmen. In the middle ages barbers not only followed the occupation usually assigned to the hairdresser, but practised as well the minor operations of surgery, such as bleeding, tooth-drawing, and bandaging. In visitations of the plague and other fatal epidemics which so frequently visited Europe in those days they were of immense service; and in the municipal records of Ferrara they are frequently named as receiving large rewards for their ability and courage in attending the plague-stricken, and are spoken of with as much respect as the regular members of the medical profession. Those who had accompanied Dr. Boschi were some ten or a dozen who had volunteered for service in the Lazaretto, and were looked upon, not only by their own craft, but by the Signori della Sanità as men much to be respected, and scarcely less worthy of honour than the doctors themselves.

When they had assembled in the hall the head physician addressed them at some length, pointing out to them their duties, explaining the different modes of treatment, and the necessity of showing kindness and consideration to the sick. Then assigning them to the different surgeons under whom they were to act, he called an assistant to show them the rooms set apart for their private use.

When the barbers had left the hall the surgeon called the attention of Dr. Boschi to the presence of Teresa, telling him that she had a favour to ask of him. The great physician, who had not hitherto observed her, seemed much surprised, and approaching her, asked, with much kindness in his tone, what he could do for her. Teresa, although she felt somewhat nervous in the presence of the eminent man of science, told him that a dear friend of hers had the evening before been attacked by the plague, and had that morning been brought into the Lazaretto, and that she wished to remain to nurse her.

“It is impossible,” said the doctor, evidently surprised at the request. “I cannot entertain the idea for a moment.” Then turning to the surgeon, he continued, “How did she come here, when the

rules so strictly prohibit any stranger setting foot on the island?"

"She came over in the ferry-boat, with her sick friend, and without my knowledge," said the surgeon. "She much wanted to go into the wards, but I would not allow her."

"You acted rightly," said the physician. "Who is her friend, and from what part of the city do they come?"

The surgeon, instead of answering, showed the doctor the entry he had made in the book. Finding the name of *Madonna Ponte*, and no address, *Dr. Boschi* inquired the reason of it being omitted, remarking that the orders of the *Signori della Sanita* were imperative that the address as well as the name of every patient should be inserted. The surgeon drew the physician aside, and whispered a few words in his ear, to which he evidently listened with great interest. When he had concluded, *Dr. Boschi* made no further inquiry. For a moment he looked at the young girl before him, and then said kindly to her—

"Once more, my dear child, I cannot allow you to remain here, and must request that you will return without delay. In saying this, I assure you I speak only for your welfare. I see the ferry-boat is getting ready to cross. Now, without further hesitation, go with it. Be assured every attention shall be shown to your friend." Then perceiving that *Teresa* was about to offer further objections, he continued, "Now do not cause me to speak harshly, for I should do so most unwillingly, but I must be obeyed." He then said to the surgeon, "Would you accompany her to the boat?"

The surgeon, taking *Teresa*, who was now weeping bitterly, by the hand, led her towards the water's edge, making a sign to the *padrone* to await his arrival. At the moment the *Becca-morti* were entering the boat, *Pedretti*, who was among them, not wishing again to be observed by the surgeon, made some excuse and slipped away. The surgeon, when he reached the boat, told the *padrone* to put the young lady ashore with all civility, adding that in the evening he should have a word to say to him for having brought, without permission, a stranger to the *Lazzaretto*.

Teresa now entered the boat, and as soon as they were out of hearing of the surgeon, who stood on the shore watching them, the *padrone* said to *Teresa*—

"I suspect, my pretty lass, you have got me into trouble for ferrying you over contrary to the doctor's orders. No matter; I have had worse sins to answer for. He cannot hurt me much, that's one good thing; for he knows he would have no little difficulty in getting another to supply my place."

Teresa was in too much sorrow to listen to the man's remarks. *Gerolamo* now took his seat beside her, and whispering to her to be of good comfort, promised that if he had the opportunity he would call the next morning and inform her how *Madonna Ponte* was progressing. *Teresa* thanked him for his kindness, and in a few minutes afterwards the boat reached the shore. On landing, and while the

horses were being placed in the cart, preparatory to the *Becca-morti* taking their afternoon patrol through the city, *Gerolamo* conducted *Teresa* to his mother's house. They found the poor widow sadly depressed at the loss of the society of her two companions. She received *Teresa* with much affection, and *Gerolamo* then left them to attend to his duties.

CHAPTER XXI.—THE RELIGIOUS PROCESSION.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the appearance of the plague, the persecutions of the Inquisition commenced. At first sight it might appear that the visitation of this terrible malady would, for a time, have allayed the ardour of the Holy Office; but even had the great body of the inquisitors and the clergy been content to suspend operations for some time longer, the energetic *Oriz* would not. On the contrary, he rather looked upon the threatened pestilence as a means to an end. He endeavoured to instil into the minds of the Dominicans the necessity of teaching the people, by every means in their power, that the plague which was then hanging over the city was an indisputable sign of the divine anger, caused by the apathy which had hitherto existed among them on the subject of heresy, not only in allowing the pernicious doctrines taught by Calvin and Luther to spread without any attempt to counteract them, but actually, in many instances, permitting them without any censure to receive the patronage and support of the noble and the learned. He urged them in the instructions they gave to their congregations, to impress upon them the fact that no matter how high in authority in the state an individual might be, even although he were the monarch himself, he was still subject to the censure of the Church, and that while the strictest obedience and respect should in all worldly matters be shown to him, it was, at the same time, the duty of every true Catholic to range himself against his ruler, should the Holy Church consider him deserving of reprobation.

To the illustrious Duke *Ercole II.*, then reigning in Ferrara, these remarks could not apply, for he had always shown himself to be a true and faithful son of the Church, though it was much to be regretted that he had permitted, without sufficient restriction, the Duchess *Renée*, not only to adopt the errors of Calvinism herself, but to shield with her authority those who had fallen into the same damnable heresy. Happily his Highness had at last been convinced of the necessity of placing the illustrious lady, his wife, under restraint, until she should admit the error of her ways. He trusted that the priests would impress upon their congregations the necessity of praying to the Virgin, that she might incline that otherwise estimable lady to listen to the voice of the preachers of their faith, so that she might soon be brought back to the bosom of the true Church. He further requested them to inform their hearers that his Highness having, though with great pain, taken this step, and also that of imprisoning the different members of the Duchess's household who professed the falsely-

called reformed doctrines, it was the duty of all good subjects to follow the example of their Prince, and to assist the Holy Office and the Church in general by all the means in their power to put a stop to the plague of heresy which had lately sprung up among them, and was a thousand times more pernicious and terrible in its effects than the mortal malady then threatening the city with its visitation,—a malady in which all good Christians might see the finger of Heaven raised in wrath against the citizens of Ferrara, for the indifference they had hitherto shown towards the true Church.

He further urged the advantage of keeping alive in the hearts of the people the necessity for appeasing the divine wrath by prayers in the churches, processions, frequent confessions, and especially by rendering energetic assistance to the Holy Office in finding out those tainted with heresy, that they might be reasoned with and persuaded to return to the bosom of the true Church; or, should they still remain obdurate, that they might receive such punishment as would be a warning to others.

Although this was the plan of campaign which Oriz had decided on adopting, he was too good a diplomatist to issue instructions on his own authority. For powerful as the Inquisition was in Ferrara, it could not be denied that in it, as in every other city in Europe, a large proportion of the population, including some enlightened Catholics, looked upon the institution with little favour, considering it rather a well-organized system of espionage of a worldly nature, than a legitimate agency of the true Catholic Church. This Oriz well knew, and therefore obtained permission to issue the proclamation to the clergy in the name of the Archbishop of Ferrara from the Archiepiscopal palace, thus taking from it, to a considerable degree, the appearance of its being merely an act of the Holy Office.

But the subtlety of Oriz did not stop there. Knowing well that whenever the plague threatened to visit Ferrara, it was the custom of the noblemen and richer inhabitants immediately to quit the city, for their country seats till the danger was over, he obtained from the Duke an order prohibiting any persons, under pain of banishment and confiscation of their goods, from leaving the city without special authority. He then took good care that so many impediments should be thrown in the way of receiving such permission that the number of applicants would be very small. Thus, while the order of the Signori della Sanita strictly prohibited any person from entering the city who had not passed through quarantine, or who had arrived from any infected locality, offering at the same time a liberal reward to those who should detect offenders, the Duke interdicted persons from leaving it without permission, and Oriz was now certain that in a short time he should have the heresy in Ferrara enclosed within the walls, and thus be able effectually to stamp it out.

With this short digression, we will now return to Teresa Rosetti, whom we left, after her visit to the Lazzaretto, in the dwelling of the blind widow.

During the evening, which was a sad one indeed, little conversation took place between them, Teresa still being depressed by the shock she had received during the day, and the poor widow feeling keenly, not only the loss, but the almost certain death which awaited one whom the day before she had known in good health, and for whom she entertained such kindly feelings.

When night was closing in they received a visit from Gerolamo, but it was merely to inform them that he had been unable to gain any intelligence of Teresa's father, or to see the ferryman at San Giorgio of whom he had spoken the day before. He hoped, however, he should do so on the morrow, and if he succeeded he would immediately call and inform them if his friend Giacomo had got any news of the Judge, and also bring information to Teresa how the sick lady was progressing. Teresa thanked him for his promise, and after a little more conversation, in which he informed them that there seemed to be a lull in the spread of the pestilence, he bade them good evening and returned to the Lazzaretto.

If the conversation between the blind widow and Teresa flagged before the visit of Gerolamo, it ceased altogether after his departure. Indeed all their energy seemed to have vanished, and they sat silently together in the dark, the thought not even occurring to the widow of the necessity of lighting the lamp for the accommodation of her guest, while Teresa, on her part, seemed unconscious of the omission. About an hour after Gerolamo had left them, they separated for the night, Teresa merely throwing herself, dressed as she was, on the bed, on which her plague-stricken friend had rested the night before, heedless of the danger she thereby incurred of contracting the malady.

Hour after hour passed and no sleep came to Teresa, although as night wore on the different objects she had seen and the thoughts which had occurred to her during the day were perpetually before her mind. At last the incessant change of ideas became positively painful to her, and sitting up she pressed her hands to her head and endeavoured to collect her thoughts. She remained in this state for some time, and at length determined to pray for greater resignation and peace of mind, as well as courage to support her amid the difficulties and dangers of her position. Her prayer over, she felt great relief, and remained in a quieter state till daybreak, when she rose and mechanically occupied herself in putting the room in order, a work in which she was shortly afterwards joined by the widow, who then prepared the breakfast. Although both seemed in better spirits than on the evening before, their morning meal was eaten almost in silence. Teresa now partly opened the door of the house, and placing a stool near it, seated herself in such a position as commanded a view of the ferry, the point of departure on the Boschetto island being visible from the widow's house.

For more than an hour after she had taken her seat near the door, there were no signs of move-

ment in the island ; but then, to her great joy, she saw a number of men, and among them several who appeared to be in the dress of the Becca-morti, assemble near the large ferry-boat, and shortly afterwards enter it. The boat then pushed off from the shore, and Teresa's heart beat high with anxiety as she thought that, in a short time, she should receive intelligence of the condition of Madonna Ponte. She watched the boat till it had reached the centre of the stream, when to her dismay she saw it change its course, and proceed rapidly down the river. Without saying a word she rose from her seat and, opening the door, looked towards the landing-place opposite the gate of the Mizzona, but the horse and cart for the sick were not to be seen. The truth then flashed across Teresa's mind, that the convoy had been ordered to enter the city by one of the other gates ; and as Gerolamo would, of course, be obliged to go with them, he would not be able to bring her any tidings of Madonna Ponte till he returned to the Lazzaretto, either at midday or in the afternoon.

Teresa again entered the house and told the widow that Gerolamo had, doubtless, been ordered to enter the city by another gate, and that they would not therefore receive any intelligence of Madonna Ponte till some hours later. The widow could offer her no consolation except an expression of regret at the delay, and they both subsided into their former silence ; but although Teresa said nothing, her mind was actively employed, indeed, so much so, that she was thrown into a state of strong nervous irritability, in which she began to conjure up all imaginary dangers to her father. She felt greatly annoyed, and almost angry with Camille Gurdon, to whom she looked as the protector of her father, because he had not informed her whether he had succeeded in helping him to escape from the Ferrarese territory.

Her thoughts again reverted to Madonna Ponte, till at last the certainty of her death would hardly have caused the poor girl greater pain than that occasioned by her present state of doubt. Then she thought of her mistress the Duchess Renée, and conjured up the painful solitude she was experiencing, for she could hardly realise the fact, though Gerolamo had assured her of its truth, that the Duchess was imprisoned in a cell of the castle, without any of her friends or followers being allowed to approach her.

At last, as some relief, Teresa again opened the door and looked out. Gerolamo was not, however, to be seen, and she re-entered the house, when it occurred to her to visit the city and endeavour to discover the dwelling of Camille Gurdon, and inquire of him what had been the fate of her father. A certain amount of maiden bashfulness for some moments prevented her from acting on this impulse, until she reflected, that probably she might meet Gerolamo in the city, when she would be able to hear how he had left Madonna Ponte.

Teresa no longer hesitated, but arranging her candale in such a manner as to expose her face as

little as possible, she told the widow of her determination. The widow attempted to dissuade her, but Teresa was obstinate, and leaving the house, walked towards the Porta della Mizzano, where she found several people waiting for permission to enter, all of whom had to present themselves before the surgeon on duty. Teresa, unaware of the regulation, attempted to pass, but she was stopped by one of the guards and told she must wait her turn before she could go on. One by one, those who had assembled were admitted to the presence of the surgeon, who had a small office assigned to him near the entrance of the gate. Those who answered his questions satisfactorily were admitted into the city, if they could prove they resided at no great distance from the walls. Others, on the contrary, were sent back again. As the greater portion were peasants wishing to attend the market, few questions were asked, and in a short time Teresa's turn came, and she was shown into the surgeon's office. In it she found two gentlemen, one of whom, seated at the table was the surgeon on duty. Standing near to him was another with whom he was in partial conversation, and to Teresa's great satisfaction she recognised in him the surgeon who had received her at the Lazzaretto the day before.

The one seated at the table, who seemed somewhat surprised at a girl of Teresa's appearance being among a number of peasants, was about to address her, when the surgeon standing by his side whispered in his ear—

"Ask no questions, let her pass."

"You may go on," said the other without hesitation, though appearing surprised at his friend's remark.

Teresa then left the room, and her place was immediately taken by another applicant.

Once inside the city walls, Teresa saw it was necessary to fix on some plan of action. The first idea was to discover, if possible, the residence of Camille Gurdon, but to it she had no clue whatever. At last it occurred to her to apply at the University. She knew he had been attending the law courses held there, and it was more than probable that some of the officials might be able to give her the information she required. Knowing but little of the city, as it was perhaps the first time in her life she had ever been a hundred yards from the Palace by herself, she felt greatly embarrassed as to which street she should take. At last she timidly addressed a respectable woman passing by, and asked her if she could direct her to the University. The woman did so without hesitation, and Teresa started off in the direction, avoiding as much as possible the inquisitive glances of those she met on her way. She had occasion, however, more than once afterwards to inquire her road, until at length she succeeded in reaching the street where the building was situated. She now rapidly advanced to the gates as if fearing that her courage might give way, and on entering the archway, saw six or eight students laughing and talking together.

Teresa for a moment hesitated, when one of the students perceiving her, advanced, and with an appearance of courtesy, but considerable impertinence in his manner, asked what he could do to serve her, adding that it was seldom they had the honour of a visit from such a pretty girl. Teresa was now terribly embarrassed, but not wishing to go without an answer, she hesitatingly inquired if he could give her the address of the Swiss lawyer, Camille Gurdon.

"We have not had the pleasure of seeing him for some time," said one of the students, advancing with the same mock modesty as his fellow, "but I am quite as amiable as he is. Pray let me be your advocate and advise you. I can assure you, you will find me most respectful and attentive."

"Do not listen to him," said a third, advancing to her and addressing her in the same tone, "for I can assure you he is not to be trusted. He is a very wild, thoughtless young man, while I am considered



by the Professors to be the steadiest in the law class."

The other students now gathered round her, and the poor girl's terror became so great that much as she wished to obtain the address of Camille Gurdon, she turned round and ran hurriedly from the place. The students seemed inclined to follow her, but at the moment one of the Professors entered the building, restoring something like order among the young men, and Teresa had thus an opportunity of escaping.

She now determined to go to her father's house and see if it were still closed. She took a wrong direction, and after losing herself in a labyrinth of streets at the back of the Este Palace, she found herself in the Piazza between the Cathedral and the arcades of the Palace of Justice. For some moments she stood to consider whether she should cross the Piazza in which had assembled many persons, or return, and having decided on the latter, she was just entering the street she had left, when a crowd

of persons pushed her with such violence, as not only prevented her retiring, but forced her from the arcades with them. They still pressed on behind, while those in front were driven back by some soldiers of the guard, and municipal mace-bearers, to divide the crowd so as to allow a procession to pass through it on its way to the Cathedral. This was one of those religious processions proposed by Oriz. It was one of great pomp and magnificence. Celebrated as Ferrara was among the cities of Italy for such exhibitions, its population had rarely witnessed one of a more imposing description, and this was considered all the more creditable to the ecclesiastical authorities charged with its organization, on account of the short notice they had received for preparation. The procession, which had already visited the more celebrated churches in the city, was headed by a body of horsemen of the Duke's guard in full uniform. Then came a body of ducal trumpeters, and these were followed by one of the confraternities of laymen in their white robes, with hoods which completely covered their faces, but allowed the wearers to see without being themselves recognised, and carrying lighted wax tapers in their hands. After them appeared a number of men two and two, dressed to represent the prophets, and these were succeeded by a band of boys in white robes with wings, made of cut paper, who sustained the part of angels.* Then followed a platform on wheels on which was seated a man with a false grey beard, and dressed in a flowing white robe to represent the Almighty. A number of the parochial clergy in their robes followed, and after them three asses laden with food, a giant bearing a club on his shoulders, a live bear led by its keeper, and the three magi, arrayed in imitations of eastern dresses. At a short distance behind these came another platform on wheels, on which was seated on a chair of state a virgin and child. Then another lay confraternity in brown robes and hoods, in form resembling those already mentioned. These were followed by men dressed as devils, who were being flogged by St. Paul and St. Bernardo. It is hardly necessary to state that the blows given were of the feeblest description, the two men representing devils probably being friends or relatives of the two saints employed in punishing them.

A movement now took place in the crowd of spectators, occasioned by the advance of a high gilt crucifix, followed by a bishop bearing in a magnificently chased reliquary a hand of St. Agatha. The moment of its passing was for Teresa one of terrible embarrassment. All crossed themselves when the crucifix passed, and bent on their knees at the sight of the relic, while she, unable to retire, stood a self-convicted heretic in their midst. When the relic had passed, and those near her rose from their knees, they all regarded her with looks of great surprise not unmixed with indignation. It is possible

their anger might have developed itself in some rude remarks or actions, but fortunately at the moment their attention was withdrawn from Teresa to a group then passing in the procession. It consisted of a dead Christ on a platform borne on men's shoulders, and surrounded by the disciples, with whom were mingled a philosopher, St. Dominic, St. Francis, and St. Sebastian. Then came another platform on wheels, drawn by a buffalo, with an image in wax placed on it, representing the dead body of the Virgin Mary, and the procession was closed by a body of soldiers of the Duke's guard.

The crowd now divided into two parts, one pressing forward to enter the Cathedral with the procession at the principal gate, while the other made for the side door, hoping thereby to obtain a view of the ceremonies which were to be performed in the building, and which was fitted up with great magnificence, the scenery and other decorations being far more worthy of a place in a theatre than in a church, and strangely at variance with the simplicity which characterizes Protestant worship.

When the crowd had somewhat dispersed Teresa made another attempt to retire from the Piazza, and had nearly reached the arcades under the Palace of Justice, when she heard a sound which at once excited her attention. It was that of a large hand-bell, such as Gerolamo used when making his round. Teresa stopped and turned her eyes to the spot from whence the sound proceeded, but as it was at a great distance, she was unable to distinguish the bell-ringer. Presently, however, a person approached quickly from the spot from whence the sound came, and said to an acquaintance—

"The Virgin has already taken the city under her protection, I believe."

"How so?" asked the other.

"The Becca-morti have not a person in the cart, although they have been out more than two hours."

"The saints be praised," was the reply. "But whither are you going so fast?"

"To get a good place in the Cathedral."

"I expect you will have some difficulty; it is already quite full."

"No matter, I will try at any rate," was the reply, and the person passed on.

The bell now rang again, but nearer than before, and the moment after Teresa perceived the banner which Gerolamo carried rising above the crowd. She immediately advanced, and found the cart approaching, Gerolamo the while ringing his bell, and the crowd which surrounded it keeping at a respectful distance to avoid contact with the Becca-morti. As soon as Teresa recognised Gerolamo, without hesitation she walked up to him and said,—

"Oh! how I have longed to see you! Tell me how is my friend?"

"She continues alive, and that is all," said Gerolamo. "But why did you leave home? Return to my mother's immediately, and there you will find your father. Go at once," he continued impatiently. "Do you not see every one looking at you. Go, or you will be arrested."

* In the account books of the municipality of Ferrara there is frequent mention made of purchases of waste paper to decorate the wings of angels in religious processions and festivals.

Teresa, bewildered and overjoyed at the intelligence she had received, left Gerolamo, and had proceeded but a few paces when one of the Becca-morti quitted the cart, and advancing to an officer of the municipality, who was standing by, said to him—

"Seize that girl. She has disobeyed the orders of the Signori della Sanita."

"How so?" inquired the officer, who looked at the man with an expression of extreme disgust on his countenance.

"She was yesterday in the Lazzaretto. She came across in the ferry-boat with a friend who was plague-stricken, and a number of others in the same condition, as well as several who had died from the disorder. It is against the law for her to set foot in the city. I denounce her, and claim the reward. My name is Carlo Pedretti. I have a right to the reward, and will have it."

"I do not believe you," said the officer, still unwilling to arrest the girl.

"I tell you it is true," said Pedretti, "and all the other Becca-morti know it. And if you don't believe me, ask Dr. Boschi himself. I understand you: you want the reward for yourself."

The officer now perceived that the affair was serious. Still he appeared to hesitate, when an old woman advanced and said—

"And I denounce her as a heretic. She not only just now refused to cross herself when the crucifix passed in the procession, but she would not kneel to the relic of the blessed St. Agatha when everybody else did. All saw she would not kneel. But, remember, I claim the reward. You let her go, if you dare, and I will complain to the Holy Office. Listen, neighbours," she continued, addressing those near her; "he will not arrest a heretic when she is pointed out to him."

A considerable crowd had now collected, attracted by the denunciations made by Carlo Pedretti and the old woman against Teresa, and the excitement continuing to increase, the officer, evidently against his will, arrested Teresa, and conducted her into the receiving-room of the Palace of Justice, where accusations against prisoners were first heard. Here they found the syndaco's substitute, who on seeing a young girl of such respectable appearance brought before him, inquired, with much surprise on his countenance, what offence she was accused of.

"She is accused of two offences," was the man's reply. "First of disobeying the orders of the Signori della Sanita in entering the city after having yesterday visited the Lazzaretto, and second of heresy."

The substitute on hearing the latter charge contemptuously shrugged his shoulders, and then casting a kindly glance at Teresa, inquired who it was that had made the absurd charge of heresy against so young a girl.

"An old woman who is now outside."

"Why did you pay attention to her?" said the substitute.

"She had collected a crowd round her, many of

whom seemed to side with her, and to prevent a disturbance I thought it best to bring the young girl before you."

After a moment's hesitation the syndaco's substitute said, "Call in the old woman, and let us hear what she has to say."

The woman was now brought into the room, followed by several of her companions, whom the officer in vain attempted to keep out.

"What is your accusation against this young girl?" asked the substitute.

"Of being a heretic," replied the old woman. "She refused to cross herself when the crucifix passed in the procession, and to kneel before the relic of the blessed St. Agatha."

"Did you tell her to do it?" asked the substitute.

"No, I did not," said the woman. "That was no affair of mine."

"Then," continued the substitute, at the same time glancing kindly at Teresa as if to give her a hint what answer to make, "how do you know that she saw the crucifix and the relic?"

The old woman replied, that the girl could see as well as she could.

"I am by no means certain of that," said the substitute, looking impressively at Teresa, as if to claim her particular attention to his words. "You surely did not willingly show any disrespect to the crucifix and the blessed relic?"

Teresa remained silent.

"Speak, girl," the substitute continued somewhat impatiently. "If you did not see the relic, say so, and I will not entertain the accusation."

"But I claim my reward," said the woman.

"Once more," continued the substitute to Teresa, and this time almost imploringly, and without paying any attention to the old woman, "can you not answer my question, and say that you did not see the relic and the crucifix, or you would not have shown them any disrespect?"

Teresa still continued silent.

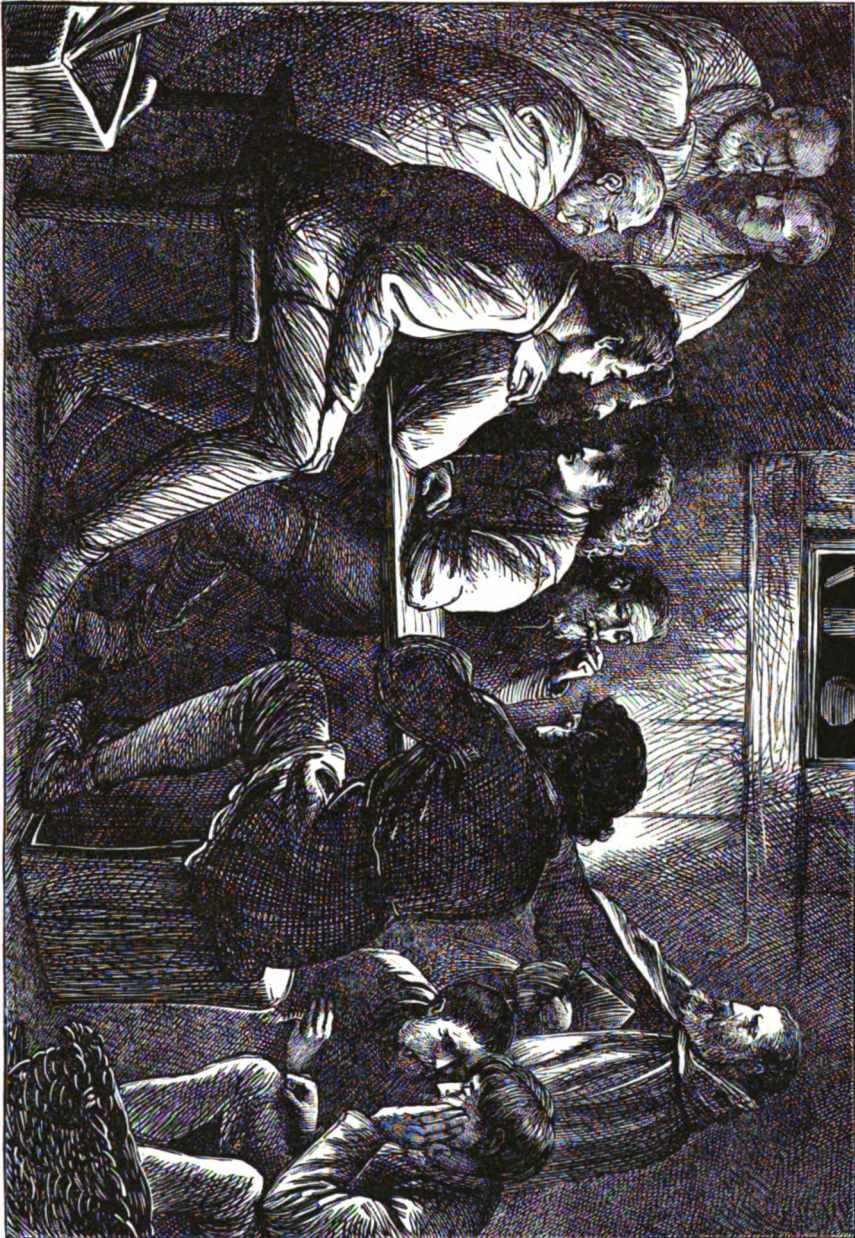
"I have no choice," said the substitute, with a look of sorrow. "I must enter the charge of heresy against you. Now as to breaking the sanitary laws. Who is it makes this accusation against her?"

"One of the Becca-morti named Carlo Pedretti," said the officer who had arrested Teresa, "and he claims the reward offered by the municipality for the detection of offenders. He also says that Dr. Boschi is aware of the fact."

"She must also be detained on that charge," said the substitute. "Place her in a cell by herself so that she may not communicate the plague to others if she has it. In the meantime we must inform the Holy Office of her arrest." Then turning to Teresa, he continued, "What is your name, my girl, and where do you reside?"

In a moment the idea flashed across Teresa's mind how much mischief might occur if she answered the question. At the same time being unwilling to state a falsehood, she replied—

"Pray do not ask me the question, for I cannot tell you."



THE MEETING IN THE BOAT-HOUSE.



"But I must have an answer," said the substitute.

"I dare not tell you," said Teresa beginning to weep.

"Listen, my poor girl," said the substitute in a kind tone of voice, "the question must be answered, if not to me to the syndaco, who, fortunately for you, is not at present in the building."

"I cannot tell you my name," said Teresa.

"Had he been here," continued the substitute, without noticing Teresa's remark, "he would not only have insisted on your answer, but probably would have put you to the torture to obtain it. Now listen to me," he said slowly and impressively, "can you not tell me your name and address? Of course it does not matter to me who you are or where you live, as I should personally take no trouble to make further inquiries about you. So you see it will be better for you to give me your name and tell me where you live now, than when you have to do so suffering from the torture cord. Now take my advice and tell me your name and address."

"I cannot," said Teresa, after a moment's hesitation. "It is impossible."

"You must have your own way then," said the good-natured substitute. "I am sorry for it. Take her away, and see that she has no communication with any of the other prisoners."

CHAPTER XXII.—THE ESCAPE.

WE must now leave Teresa in her solitary cell in the prison of the Palazzo della Ragione, and return to her father and Bernardino Ochino, in the house of the boat-builder at Ponte-Lagoscuro. The reader will remember that at the time we left them, a few of the Protestants of the district were about to meet in secrecy, alarmed at the report which had reached them of the persecutions having broken out in Ferrara, and rightly fearing they might in a short time extend to themselves. Their meeting presented a singular and not unpicturesque scene. The bright calm beams of a clear full Italian moon lighted up the scenery of the river, while on a carpenter's bench in a part of the workshop farthest from the river was placed a lamp, which shed its light over a translation of the Holy Scriptures belonging to Frederigo, and which now lay open for Ochino's use. The venerable man was kneeling before it, and his small congregation having devoutly placed themselves on their knees around him, reverently and earnestly joined in the prayer he was offering up, that God would take the few children of the scattered flock there assembled under his protection, and give them help and consolation, together with courage and endurance to sustain them in the persecutions with which they were threatened.

When they rose from their knees Ochino read a portion of the Scriptures, from the Old and New Testaments, and then addressed them on the difficult position they, and the scattered Protestant Church throughout the whole territory, were now placed. He touched eloquently and forcibly on the spiritual despotism exercised by the Church of

Rome, in not permitting the faithful to believe anything but that which was approved by the Pope, who, like the rest of mankind, was, at the best, but fallible. He insisted that confessions and absolutions, pardons and indulgences, together with prayers to the saints, and the fire of purgatory, were but inventions devised by the Papacy for the enthrallment of men's minds and consciences contrary to the word of God. Pointing out to them how Daniel had prophesied the coming of the Pope, saying that he should induce men wickedly to break the promises which they had made to God, he urged them to set at nought the idea, that as God was angry with man, and Christ could not sufficiently pacify his wrath, the Pope must stand forward as our advocate, thus (as Daniel had prophesied) transposing the time of grace to the time of the law, and that of light to that of darkness.

"Better, my brethren," he said, "endure all the persecutions than admit so grievous a blasphemy. I beg you to pray earnestly for courage to support the oppression which threatens you, and submit to the fate which may be in store for you with the same courage and resignation as soldiers show on the field of battle."

The most profound attention was given by the congregation to Ochino's discourse, and when he had concluded they one and all thanked him warmly for the consolation and encouragement they had obtained from it. For more than an hour afterwards he remained conversing with them, and then Frederigo suggested the propriety of their dispersing one by one, so as to avoid attracting the notice of their neighbours. His advice was taken, and the little meeting gradually scattered, each member of it respectfully kissing the pastor's hand, and bidding him farewell with many expressions of affection and respect.

When the friends in the boat-house were left by themselves, they began to talk seriously over the best plan to be adopted for Ochino's escape. Frederigo suggested that they should cross the river and continue their road northward till they arrived at the canal which led to Commacchio. They could there call at the house of a Protestant friend, and should they find him within, they could remain with him and determine what further steps to take. If this friend should be from home, they could either continue their road by land to Venice, or by the canal to Commacchio. This plan was decided on, as combining more advantages than any other. Should they be followed they would have a better opportunity of eluding their pursuers, as the canal diverged almost at a right angle to the road to Venice, and with a little care they might be able to conceal the road they had taken. This uncertainty, combined with the danger of attempting to seize a fugitive in Venetian territory without a warrant from the Republic, offered to Ochino an almost positive certainty of escape.

Ochino now put on his cowl and wallet, and prepared himself for the journey. They then took leave of Frederigo, and entering the boat crossed

to the other side of the river, Giacomo taking as much care as possible to avoid being seen from the shore. Shortly afterwards they reached the Venetian side of the river, where they parted, Ochino and the Judge shedding tears, and each seeming to be under the impression that it was the last time they should meet in their earthly pilgrimage. Their sad parting over, Ochino, accompanied by Paulo, who was to act as his guide on the journey, were put ashore, and the Judge Rosetti proposed to Giacomo to return to Ferrara with all speed, as he was in a state of intense anxiety respecting the fate of his daughter. With all Giacomo's exertions, however, the pace was but tardy, nor did there appear any probability of his reaching Ferrara before the middle of the next day, when fortunately they saw by the shore a light tow-boat to which the horses were at that moment being attached. Giacomo, who was acquainted with almost every boatman on the river, immediately rowed his boat in that direction, and finding he knew the man in charge of it, requested as a favour that he would allow him to affix his boat to the stern of the other. This was willingly accorded, and the Judge also promised the man with the horses a considerable reward if he reached Ferrara at an early hour the next morning.

The offer was willingly accepted, and the boats started off together at a much more rapid pace than before, and early the next morning Giacomo reached his house, there being fortunately no persons in sight at the time. Giacomo was able to conceal the Judge in a small outhouse without being observed, where it was proposed he should remain during the day, Giacomo promising that if he were

not arrested himself, he would, while at work on the ferry during the day, make every inquiry in his power as to what had taken place in Ferrara since they had been absent, and then in the evening, when others had retired to rest, they could determine what should be their future movements.

Nor did Giacomo fail to keep his promise. He worked the ferry during the whole of the day, giving evasive answers to his wife and son when they inquired what journey he had been on. Being a remarkably shrewd, clear-headed man, he soon discovered from conversation he had with the different passengers he ferried over, that persecutions or movements against the Protestants had hardly yet extended beyond the walls, although considerable activity had been shown in arresting all persons suspected of heresy within the city. He also learnt to what an extent the plague existed, and the danger there was of its spreading. The intelligence he had received respecting the Duchess and her attendants only confirmed that which he had already obtained—namely, that the Duchess was imprisoned in the castle, that many of her attendants had been incarcerated, and that liberal rewards had been offered for the apprehension of the others. Of the movements of the Holy Office he could gain but little intelligence, their operations being conducted with so much secrecy. Still, there was a report that several of those arrested were likely to be placed on trial, and if found guilty and obstinate, would be executed or severely punished as examples to others. Of Teresa and Madonna Ponte he could hear nothing. Nor was this surprising, as of all the attendants on the Duchess, they were perhaps the two least known.



CHAPTER XXIII.—TERESA IN PRISON.



WHEN the Signori della Sanità had discharged their duties, they, with the podestà, and the syndaco and his substitute, before whom Teresa had been brought the previous day, descended to the room in which the preliminary examinations of accused persons were conducted, to hear reports on the condition of

the prison, and to decide on the future disposal of the prisoners. When the head warder made his appearance, he stated that the prison was at present so full that were the plague to break out among those confined within its walls, the result would be of the most lamentable description. The syndaco then looked over the list of prisoners to ascertain if any could be discharged, or drafted off to other prisons. Unfortunately the number of such was few, as most were incarcerated either on charges of heresy, or of harbouring heretics; this, however, being more the result of the reward offered by the Inquisition for their apprehension, than from any very ardent wish of the inhabitants of Ferrara to injure their Protestant brethren.

Although the seat of the Inquisition was established in the Dominican monastery, the business of the Holy Office was conducted in a long building at the rear, having a prison underneath. This, however, was far from being large enough for all the Protestants who had been arrested since the arrival of Oriz, and the prison in the Palace of Justice was therefore brought into requisition and soon filled. Daily some of the prisoners were sent to the Dominican convent for examination, and those who recanted, either under the torture or from dread of it—and, unfortunately, they were many—were discharged, but their places were rapidly filled by other persons accused of the same offence. Those who remained steadfast to the faith were again sent to prison, there to await a new examination, or to suffer punishment.

On going over the list of prisoners admitted the previous day, the syndaco came to a blank, and asked his substitute for an explanation. He was

told that a young girl had been arrested on the double charge of breaking the sanitary regulations, and of heresy. She had been charged, in the first place, with visiting the Lazzaretto in company with a plague-stricken friend, and thereafter entering the city. The second offence of which she was accused was omitting to make the sign of the cross when the crucifix passed her in the procession, and refusing to kneel to the relic of St. Agatha.

"As she appeared to be a very inoffensive girl, I wanted an excuse to discharge her," he continued, "and tried hard to persuade her to admit that she intended no disrespect, that, in fact, she was not aware that the crucifix and the relic were passing at the time; but she refused to make the admission, so I had no alternative. Thinking a little solitary confinement might bring her to a better state of mind, I sent her to one of the cells, where she now is."

"What is her name?" said the syndaco.

"That is the worst feature in the case," said the substitute; "I could not obtain from her either name or address. I wish you would see her, perhaps she might give them to you. In my opinion there is very little harm about her."

The syndaco now ordered the warder to bring the prisoner in, and in a few minutes he returned with Teresa.

There was at first sight little appearance of obstinacy about the poor girl; on the contrary, she appeared overwhelmed with sorrow.

"My substitute informs me," the syndaco said in a kindly tone of voice, "that yesterday when brought before him, charged with two serious offences, you would not give him your name and address. I hope you will not refuse them to me this morning. I say so for your own welfare, as I wish to befriend you if I possibly can. Now tell me what is your name."

"Indeed I cannot. I dare not," said Teresa, the tears trickling down her face as she spoke.

"Dare not?" said the syndaco. "Of what are you afraid? Be assured the law is strong enough to protect you from any person who may wish to injure you. Now be reasonable and give me your name."

"Indeed I cannot," said the poor girl. "If I only were concerned I would willingly, but—"

Here she stopped, as if recollecting herself. The syndaco, observing her embarrassment, said to her,—

"Go on, you have much more to fear from silence than from honestly speaking the truth."

Still Teresa remained silent; and the syndaco continued, "Once more, speak out, my child, and I will befriend you if I can."

"Indeed I cannot," said Teresa. "Oh! don't ask me."

"By persisting in your refusal," said the syndaco, "are you aware of the means you compel me to resort to?"

Teresa looked at him with horror, for she anticipated too correctly what he was about to say.

"The only means now left to me for obtaining your answer is to subject you to the torture of the cord. Warder," he continued, "tell the executioner to see that it is in readiness."

The warder was about to leave the room, when Teresa, in the utmost terror, caught his arm to retain him.

"Oh! do not put me to the torture!" she exclaimed, "You cannot be so cruel!"

"Then give me your name."

In a moment there flashed across her mind the thought that were she to comply with the syndaco's request her father would be in danger of discovery, and this gave her courage to reply in a tone of great resolution,—

"Do with me what you please, I will not reveal my name."

The syndaco, looking at her with great interest, said to the warder, "Conduct her to the torture room, and show her the cord and pulley, explaining its use. Then take her back to her cell. I hope to-morrow," he continued, addressing Teresa, "I shall find you more reasonable, for I can assure you it would grieve me to hurt you. Now go, and remember what I have said, and think of the punishment which you are likely to bring upon yourself if you continue obstinate."

The warder having led Teresa from the room, the syndaco said to his substitute,—

"I should be sorry to employ force in obtaining the name of that young girl, but there is a mystery about her which ought to be explained. That there can be but little harm in her I admit; still, if we discover who she is it may lead to matters more important."

"She certainly must have strong reasons for concealing her name with such determination, and there is little difficulty in detecting from her language, manner, and dress, that her position in life is far above the average of our prisoners. At least such was the case till lately, but now the energetic action taken by the Holy Office has sent us prisoners of a far higher grade in society than we have been accustomed to hitherto."

"I shall not be sorry," said the syndaco, "when the Holy Office finds it advisable to relax their efforts. Catholic as I am, and I hope a true son of the Church, it goes sadly against me to find among our prisoners those with whom I have been on terms of personal friendship, and who have hitherto enjoyed the respect and esteem of their fellow-citizens. But to return to this young girl, what are we to do with her? Her name we must include in the list to be sent to the Holy Office."

"Possibly the sight of the cord and pulley and the explanation of their use by the warder may induce her to change her mind," said the substitute.

"That it very often does compel a change of purpose I admit," said the syndaco, "but it will not do so in her case. Keenly as she is alive to the pain the cord would inflict, and fearfully as she

would suffer from it, be assured that torture will not extort her secret from her. And Heaven forbid that I should be the cause of making her confess by such means!" he continued. "Still we must take steps to prove, if necessary, to the Holy Office that we have not been indifferent to their orders. What would you advise me to do?"

"Send some one to the Lazzaretto to inquire the name of her friend, and thus we may indirectly discover her own."

"Do so," said the syndaco. "If the plague be really abating, there will be no occasion to punish her for a breach of the sanitary laws. And if we can obtain her name, and an admission from her that she intended no disrespect to the relic of St. Agatha, I will immediately release her."

The substitute now sent a messenger to the Lazzaretto, who returned several hours afterwards without the information. The surgeon who had admitted Madonna Ponte was not in the Lazzaretto, and the head physician could not remember the name of the patient who had been accompanied by the young girl. It is more than probable that this was merely an evasion on his part, as he could easily have obtained it by referring to his list. Possibly Dr. Boschi's objection to giving the name might have arisen from the authoritative tone of the messenger who demanded the information, as if the head physician were legally bound to give it, while he, on the contrary, resolutely maintained that in all matters connected with the Lazzaretto, or the Boschetti Islands, his jurisdiction was subject to no other authority.

For nearly a week Teresa remained in solitary imprisonment, more than once during that time appearing before the syndaco, who on each occasion, by threats, or by entreaties, endeavoured to obtain her name and place of abode, but without success. At last, tired of being refused, he resolved to trouble himself no more about her, but to trust to chance for information. Thinking, however, that if such flagrant disobedience to his authority were allowed, it would be subversive of all prison discipline, and finding that there were no symptoms of her being attacked by the plague, he ordered her to be placed with the other female prisoners, where she was to remain till she obeyed his orders. Probably he might also have thought that there her silence would give way sooner. He could easily perceive that she was a girl belonging to an elevated position in society, and therefore likely to be soon disgusted with her fellow-prisoners, many of whom were of the lowest and most disreputable order.

If such were his thoughts, he was doomed to disappointment, for although many of the prisoners belonged to the most degraded portion of the female population in Ferrara, there were several who had been arrested for holding Protestant opinions, and who were awaiting their examinations before the Inquisitors. These, easily recognising one another, formed a separate community, though even here the terrible espionage which had

been established in Ferrara was apparent, for while each unhappy prisoner earnestly wished for advice and consolation from the others, all were afraid to make a confidant, lest they might choose one who would, on the next opportunity, betray them. Still a sort of intimacy, if not friendship, existed among them. They conversed together, and though cautious of saying a word that might betray their feelings, they did not hesitate to speak on matters which were reported to have occurred outside the prison walls. Among these subjects was naturally that of the imprisonment of the Duchess Renée.

Fortunately among the female prisoners who had been arrested on charges of heresy, two only appeared to know Teresa. Even of one of these, a respectable aged woman, the wife of a lawyer, who was well-known to the Judge Biagio Rosetti, Teresa was hardly certain, for beyond occasionally giving an expressive and significant glance, which probably might have been misunderstood, she made no other sign. The other was a young married lady, whose husband was also imprisoned on a charge of heresy, but was confined in the dungeons of the prison of the Corpus Domini. Between this lady and Teresa, although they said not a word on religious subjects, a strong current of sympathy existed. They were frequently seated side by side for hours together, little conversation, however, passing between them. After a few days' acquaintance she quitted the prison to appear before the Inquisitors, and Teresa never saw her again. The night she left, on bidding adieu to Teresa, she flung her arms round the young girl's neck, and kissing her tenderly, whispered, "May you be speedily released! I know you, but fear nothing; I will keep your secret. God bless you!" And then, after again kissing her, she turned, and left with the guard who were waiting to accompany her and some other prisoners to the convent.

CHAPTER XXIV.—THE HOLY OFFICE OF THE INQUISITION.

FOR two days subsequent to the departure of the young married lady, who had been arrested with her husband on a charge of heresy, from the prison, Teresa remained without a companion, her mind almost entirely occupied in thinking about her father. That he was in danger there could be but little doubt, and very probably he might be already in the hands of the Inquisitors. And Camille Gurdon, where was he? Could he also have been arrested, or had he accompanied Ochino in his flight? The latter idea, natural as it was, had no sooner been formed than Teresa rejected it almost with indignation. Her mind again reverted to her father, and from him to Madonna Ponte, the uncertainty of whose fate was probably more painful to the young girl than would be the certainty of her death. In this state she continued, her mind frequently reverting from one subject to another, till one night when the head warder entered. He beckoned to Teresa to follow him, and then con-

ducted her to a small room, where were the syndaco and his substitute.

"Leave us, warder," said the syndaco, "but remain within call."

As soon as the warder had closed the door, the syndaco said to Teresa,—

"My child, I have just received an order from the Holy Office to bring you before the Reverend Fathers, who wish to question you. I also must be present and answer any questions put to me, and I should be sorry were I compelled to bear witness against you for defying the law."

"In what have I been guilty of doing so?" said Teresa, in horror of being sent for by the Inquisitors. "If I have offended you I have done so unintentionally. Oh! forgive me! I would endure anything here, rather than go before the Inquisitors."

"I have no alternative but to obey their orders," said the syndaco. "The evidence I shall be compelled to give against you is that, contrary to the law, you refused to give me your name when I asked it. Be wise, and do so now. I ask it solely for your welfare. It is all I can say against you, and if you now comply with my request, all I say shall be in your favour."

Teresa was silent for a moment. Terrible, however, as was the alarm which she felt at offending the Inquisitors, her anxiety for her father's safety was greater, and she replied, that she could not give her name.

"Then I have no alternative," said the syndaco sadly. "If you will not give me your name," he continued after a moment's silence, "let me advise you not to withhold it from the Reverend Fathers. Nay more, answer honestly every question they may put to you."

"There are some things I will not tell them," said Teresa, now animated with the courage of despair.

"My child, my child, do not say so. You little know those with whom you will soon have to deal."

"They cannot make me speak if I will not," said Teresa firmly.

"Cannot!" said the syndaco. "My poor child, before you quit them this evening your inmost thoughts—even those you would conceal with your life's blood—they will tear from you. I never yet met one who could resist the torture as they apply it. If you do not answer them, they will fasten your hands together with a cord, and by it will raise you with a sudden jerk from the ground till possibly your joints will be torn from their sockets, and then you will be questioned and your answers will be written down. That concluded, you will be again submitted—" Here Teresa turned ghastly pale, and was evidently on the point of fainting. The syndaco hurriedly called to the warder to bring him a cup of water, with which he bathed Teresa's temples, and she soon recovered.

"And now, my poor child," he said, "we must delay no longer. Summon up courage, and on our way to the convent ponder well what I have said and take my advice."

Teresa, bewildered and not yet quite recovered from the shock she had felt at hearing the description of the torture to which she would be subjected if she refused to give her name and thus betray her father, now left the prison, and, escorted by the syndaco, the head warder, and a soldier of the municipal guard, disguised as a civilian, proceeded towards the Dominican convent. As they went through the streets they maintained the strictest silence that they might not attract attention. The cool evening air had the effect of clearing the brain of Teresa, and she looked with curiosity on those they met in the streets, as if expecting to see some one she knew. Nothing, however, occurred worthy of notice, and at length they reached the building at the back of the convent, in which the business of the Holy Office was conducted.

On entering, the syndaco told the lay brother on duty in the hall that he had brought the prisoner ordered by the Reverend Father Oriz.

"You have been delayed, have you not?" said the lay brother; "the Reverend Fathers have been for some time expecting you, and are already assembled in the council chamber. I will inform them of your arrival." So saying, he left the hall, and in a few moments afterwards he returned to conduct the syndaco and his prisoner into the presence of the Inquisitors.

The sight which met their eyes on entering the Council Chamber might have struck terror to the mind of a person of stronger nerves than the poor girl who was now brought before the Inquisitors. The room, which was lofty, was lighted by a huge brazen lamp suspended from the ceiling, in such a position as to cast a strong light on the countenance of the prisoner. A long table separated Teresa from her judges, who were seated opposite to her, dressed in the frocks of Dominican monks. In their centre, and exactly opposite to the place where Teresa stood, sat Oriz in a chair somewhat more pretentious than the others. He was ghastly pale, and looked as if he had been suffering from ill-health and had not yet quite recovered. Except for the extraordinary lustre in his keen black eye, Teresa might have taken him for a waxen figure, so motionless was he. On his right sat Father Fabrizio, who was Chief Inquisitor before the arrival of Oriz, and on his left, a monk of the same order who acted as secretary, having a large open manuscript book before him, and a pen and ink-horn at his side. Behind the monks seated at the table were several others in the dress of the same order, who were not so well seen. One other person remains to be noticed. He was a tall, powerfully built, beetle-browed man, stern and brutal in feature, and coarsely clad. As Teresa entered her eye for a moment fell on him, and even when standing terrified before the Inquisitors, the dread she felt at this repulsive-looking individual continued to occupy a large share of her thoughts.

The examination now commenced by the secretary asking Teresa her name. She remained silent, unwilling to give it, yet afraid to refuse. After a

moment's pause Oriz said—"Her name is Teresa Rosetti; she is the daughter of the Judge Biagio Rosetti, and one of the ladies in waiting on her Highness."

Teresa looked at him with wonder. While he spoke he continued to gaze on her, and the words seemed to proceed without effort of any kind from his lips. Teresa now for the first time remembered, from the tone of his voice, that she had seen him once before—on the day when he had the interview with the Duchess, but illness had so altered his appearance that she did not recognise him till she heard his voice.

After the secretary had entered her name, he asked her where her father resided.

"Oh do not ask me," said Teresa, sorrowfully. "I dare not answer you."

"Do not be obstinate, maiden," said the secretary. "A reply we must have, and we should be sorry to resort to painful means to obtain it."

"How can I betray my own father?" said Teresa.

"There are circumstances," said Oriz, with a solemn tone of voice, "in which denouncing a parent may be conducive to the welfare of that parent's soul. It may be so in this instance with your father, though both you and he are at the present time guilty of holding the damnable heresy promulgated by the arch-heretics, John Calvin and Bernardino Ochino. Do not misunderstand me. You must inform us where your father and Ochino are now to be found."

"I know nothing of Ochino," said Teresa.

"Maiden, do not say so, for we know to the contrary," said Oriz. "We know that when he arrived in Ferrara your father first sheltered him, and then conducted him to the Duchess at the Palace of San Francesco, and while there, you, on more than one occasion, were the means of communication between them. Can you deny it?"

Teresa was silent.

"Once more I ask you, can you deny it?"

Teresa still made no reply.

"Why are you so obstinate, girl?" said Oriz.

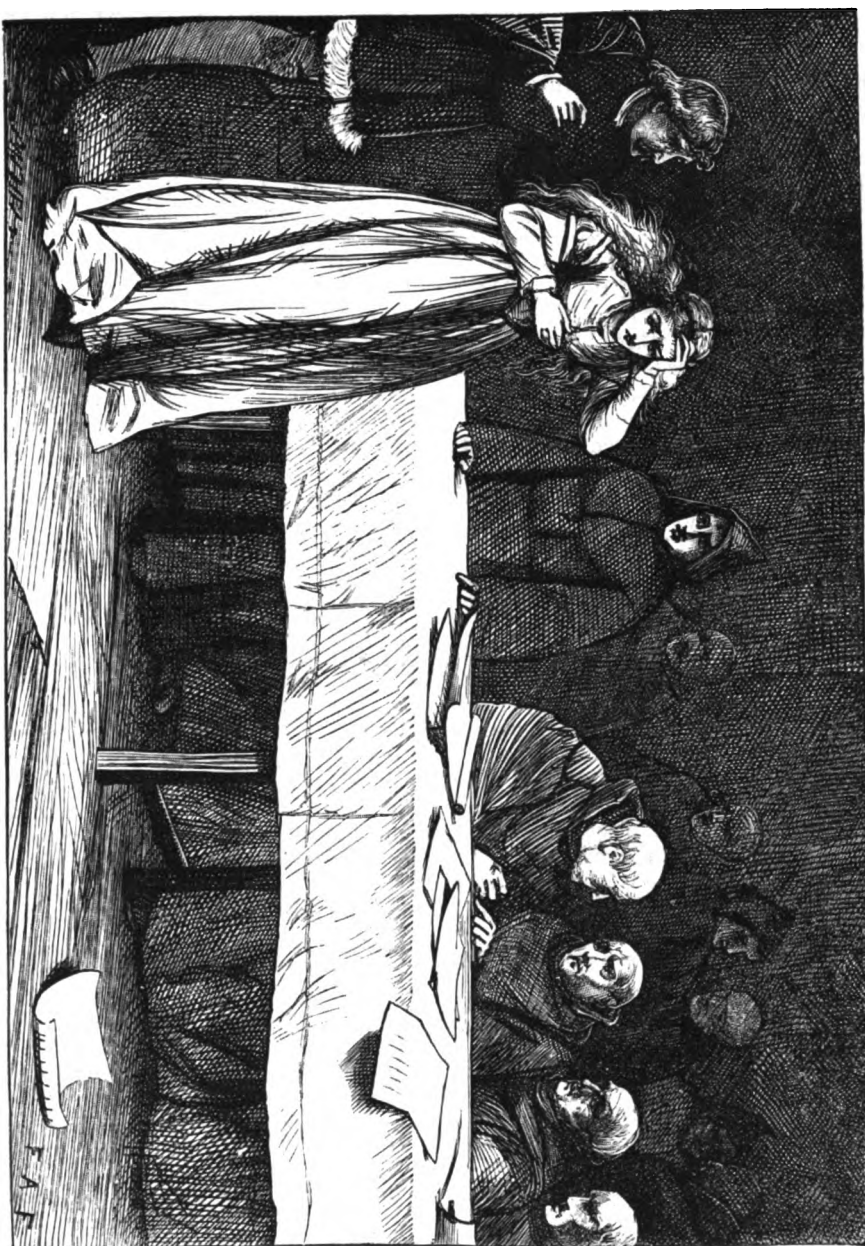
"Know that the proof is in our own hands. Brother Felix," he continued, though without turning his head, to one of the monks behind him, "was not this prisoner on more than one occasion the means of communication between the heretic Bernardino Ochino and the Judge Biagio Rosetti?"

"She was," said the monk, in a low tone of voice.

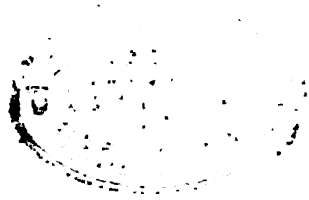
Low as was the tone in which the reply was uttered, it fell on the ear of Teresa like a heavy peal of thunder. She staggered, and would have fallen had she not leant on the table for support.

"Come forward, Brother Felix," said Oriz, "and let the prisoner see how futile on her part is further attempt at concealment."

A movement was now made among the monks to allow Brother Felix to reach the table. When Teresa cast her eyes on him, she uttered a loud scream, and fell senseless on the floor. The witness, who was clad in the garb of a novice of the



TERESA IN THE COUNCIL-CHAMBER.



Dominican order, was no other than Camille Gurdon.

CHAPTER XXV.—FRA FELIX.

GREAT excitement was visible on the habitually calm, well-disciplined countenances of the Dominican monks in the Council Chamber when they saw Teresa fall senseless on the floor. Some quitted their seats and walked round to the side of the table to assist the syndaco in raising her. Even the executioner, the ill-looking man whom Teresa had observed when she entered, came forward to assist her. Brother Felix, as we may now call him, stood motionless where Teresa had recognised him, whether overwhelmed with shame at the effect produced on her by his infamy, or afraid to awaken suspicion in the mind of his superior that he was in any way interested in the girl, it would be difficult to say. Perhaps he might have had for the first time some idea of the feeling Teresa entertained for him, and was thus taken by surprise. That he had endeavoured to make himself agreeable to her was true, although actuated at first solely by the vanity of wishing to make an impression on the heart of so pretty a girl.

It is true that such behaviour was somewhat at variance with the rules of the Dominican order in which he had previously enrolled himself as a novice, and afterwards, in the ardour of enthusiasm, had offered to play the spy in the cause of the Holy Inquisition. Possibly he might have considered that in assuming a lay character, it was not unpardonable to follow a more secular line of conduct than was strictly in accordance with the vows he was about to take. He had originally been educated as a Protestant, but had afterwards become a pervert to the Roman Catholic faith, and, like most perverts, was more enthusiastic in the advancement of his new creed, than those who had been born and trained in it. From his insinuating and courteous manner, he had been told off to watch and report on all that took place in the house of the Judge Rosetti, and through Teresa, in the Palace of San Francesco itself. And well did he perform the duties assigned to him. At the same time, that which had at first been a mere passing flirtation, developed at last into an ardent passion, so much so indeed, that he was upon the point of declaring himself openly to Teresa and endeavouring to persuade her to elope with him as his wife, when Oriz arrived.

After examining the working of the Inquisition in Ferrara, Oriz made many alterations, one result of which was that Brother Felix had to assume his novice's dress, and confine himself to the walls of the convent, where he was to remain preparatory to being sent with a monk in charge of a special message to the General of the Order in Rome. Brother Felix with great readiness submitted to the order. And it might have been dangerous for many reasons not to have done so, for he had, when acting the part of a layman, made many acquaintances in the city, and were he now to be

recognised as a novice of a religious order, it might not only cause great scandal to his convent, but be productive of considerable danger to himself.

With great difficulty the fathers succeeded in restoring animation to Teresa, and when a reaction took place, it was succeeded by so violent a fit of hysterics that the Inquisitors saw it would be utterly useless to carry the examination further that evening. Oriz even, who had remained motionless in his seat, betraying no sign of sympathy or anxiety in his countenance, saw it would serve no purpose.

"We will not continue our examination further at present," he said. "Take her back to your prison," he continued, turning to the syndaco; "and there let her be attended with every care, that she may be sufficiently recovered for us to question her further to-morrow."

"At what hour would you wish her to be brought here, Reverend Father?" inquired the syndaco.

"Her examination to-morrow," said Oriz, "can take place in the Question Chamber of the Palace of Justice. See that all is prepared for it, and the executioner in attendance, should it unfortunately be requisite to apply the torture. I will conduct the examination myself, that is to say, if my health will permit. If not, I will send a substitute. Let everything be in readiness by noon. Lend me your arm, Brother Felix," he continued—possibly noticing that the novice was about to join the group who had encircled Teresa, "lend me your arm, for I still feel very weak." So saying he rose from his seat, and leaning on the arm of Brother Felix, slowly quitted the Council Chamber.

More humanity was shown to Teresa after the chief Inquisitor had quitted the Council Chamber than during his presence. Even the monk who had acted as secretary seemed to be interested in the fate of the beautiful girl, and ordered a lay brother to see that Oriz's own litter was prepared to carry her to the Palace of Justice. Presently the lay brother returned with the information that the litter was in readiness, and the syndaco, taking Teresa in his arms, carried her down-stairs and placed her in it. He with his assistants then proceeded towards the Palace of Justice, and from time to time he whispered in the poor girl's ear some words of consolation, which, however, she did not hear. On arriving at the Palace of Justice she was carried into one of the audience rooms, where she remained in a half fainting condition, till a cell, or rather strong chamber which was occasionally used for detaining prisoners of importance before their examination, was prepared for her. In the meantime the wife of one of the warders, who was usually employed as nurse, during the illness of any of the superior prisoners, was sent for and ordered to wait all night with Teresa. The syndaco also told her that every attention was to be given to her patient, and should she think the attendance of the physician of the prison to be necessary, he was to be sent for, in order that the girl might be strong enough to be examined the next day.

All being in readiness, Teresa was removed to the cell which had been prepared for her, and placed in charge of the nurse. For some time she remained quiet, or rather in a bewildered condition, replying at hazard to any questions or remarks made to her by the nurse. As time passed on she began to realise her position, and to recall the events of the evening. She was relieved by a flood of tears in which she indulged without restraint, as the nurse was now fast asleep. When day broke Teresa was calmer, and sat on her bed in a quiet resigned frame of mind, apparently willing to submit to anything that might be ordered apart from betraying the secret of her father's abode.

About two hours before midday the syndaco entered the cell and told her to prepare herself for the examination which would take place at noon.

"And once more let me beg of you, my child," he said, "to answer candidly any questions which may be put to you. You must be well aware that even if you have the courage to support the torture—which I much doubt—it will merely delay for a day or two the discovery of your father's abode, for every dwelling in Ferrara, from the palaces of the Duke to the poorest hovel in the suburbs, will be searched for him! And if he be found, then how much more severe will be your punishment! You will be accused of having been obdurate, not only to the demands of the police of Ferrara, but to the Holy Inquisitors, and your silence will be adduced as a reason for increasing the severity of your punishment as a heretic; while your candid answer might probably have the effect of mitigating it. Now take my advice, and answer the questions which are put to you."

Teresa made no verbal reply to the good-natured syndaco, but merely shook her head, while the tears gathered in her eye.

"Well, my child, I can do no more," he said. "I hope before the examination commences you will be in a more reasonable frame of mind."

During the time which passed before the hour fixed for examination, Teresa remained to all appearance calm and resigned, if not indifferent to her fate; while her mind was much agitated by conflicting thoughts. Although she firmly resolved that no torture should induce her to betray her father, he was not now the person uppermost in her thoughts; for her mind almost entirely dwelt upon the young Swiss whom she had known as Camille Gurdon. Till the discovery of his treachery, she was not aware herself of the place occupied by him in her heart. That she greatly admired him, and had the fullest reliance in his honour and integrity, was true; but she was not previously aware that she had any warmer feeling towards him. She now found that she had in her heart a great love for him, and that this love had been developed by a sudden shock of the most cruel and unexpected description. She had placed in his keeping with the most perfect reliance, not only her own and her father's welfare, but even their lives,—and now she perceived that this man was

nothing but a despicable spy. So detestable did his behaviour now appear, that great as her love for him unknowingly had been, she, in a spirit of true womanhood, felt herself degraded in having bestowed her affection on a being so contemptible.

In this frame of mind, occasionally mingled with anxiety for her father's safety, and thoughts of the Duchess Renée imprisoned in her dungeon in the castle, the time passed till the hour for the examination approached, when the door of her cell opened, and the head warder made his appearance. He told her that a Reverend Father had arrived from the convent to make preparations for the examination, which would now take place in less than half an hour, and that he had requested that she should be brought before him that he might advise her on the folly of attempting to withhold any information from the chief Inquisitor, and to explain how much more severe her punishment would be should she not take his advice.

Teresa mechanically rose from her seat and followed the warder down a long corridor, terminating in a flight of steps leading to a door opening into the Question Chamber. It was a small octagonal room, its only furniture consisting of one or two seats and a table, while before them hung from the centre of the room the cord and pulley used in extorting evidence from unwilling witnesses and offenders. As the cord, at the moment Teresa entered, was somewhat above the line of vision, she saw it not, but her eye rested on a Dominican brother who, with his back towards her, was getting ready some papers and an ink-horn for the examination. On hearing their footsteps as they entered, he turned his head slightly, but not so as Teresa could see his features, and said in a whisper to the warder as he approached, "Leave us for a few minutes, but be within call if I want you."

A slight expression of surprise passed over the warder's countenance, but he made no reply and quitted the room, leaving the monk and the prisoner together.

As soon as the warder had quitted the room and closed the door after him, the monk quickly turned round, and throwing back the hood he had worn, displayed to the astonished girl the features of her late lover, the now Brother Felix. She was about to utter a cry of alarm, when he advanced towards her and said hurriedly,—

"Teresa, recover yourself. Do not be alarmed, or you may bring ruin on both of us. Listen to me with attention, for in a few minutes Oriz and the Inquisitors will be here. I have stolen from the convent contrary to orders solely to save you if I can. Follow my advice, and when they ask you for the abode of your father, give them a false one without hesitation. Let it be outside the city or at some distance, say at Lagoscuro or Conmachio if you please, so as to give time; and while the Inquisitors seek for him, I will provide for your escape from prison, and we will fly together."

Teresa made him no verbal reply, but drawing

herself up, cast on him a glance of combined indignation and contempt.

"Ah! Teresa," he continued, "you have good reason to hold me in aversion, I admit, but bitterly do I regret the wrong I have done you. Now let me make amends by saving you if I can; and," he continued, advancing and attempting to take her hand, which she instantly drew from him, "succeed in it I will, for I have both the courage and strength for the attempt, and the ingenuity to carry it out. Now do not hesitate, for every moment lost renders the difficulty of your escape the greater."

Teresa still made him no reply, but with great dignity in her attitude, continued to cast on him the same look of scorn and reproach.

"Nay, Teresa, if I am so loathsome in your eyes that you will not listen to me, let your own interest and that of your father guide you in this matter. Remember it is not solely your welfare that is at stake. Continue to hold me in contempt and detestation if you please, but give me the opportunity of redressing some of the evil I have committed by saving you and your father. This I can do without fail, that is to say, if he is not at this moment within the walls of Ferrara, though even then I might still succeed; but the difficulty would be greater. Will you grant me but this favour, even though afterwards you may continue to hold me in the contempt you now do?"

Teresa for the moment somewhat altered her manner, and for the first time spoke to him.

"How am I to know," she said with great emphasis in her tone, "that you are not at this moment deceiving me, and that in making this offer, you are only trying to draw from me the abode of my poor father in order that you may betray him?"

"Teresa," said Brother Felix, looking at her with a certain amount of respectful reproach, "can you consider me capable of such despicable treachery?"

Teresa made him no answer, but regarded him with the same calm dignified stern look.

"I cannot blame you," said the wretched man; "but what can I do? For heaven's sake listen to reason! I tell you that were I even at this moment the traitor you believe me to be, you could not injure your father by escaping and giving me the chance of assisting him. His arrest is merely a question of time. It would be impossible for him to leave the Ferrarese territory, while you are in your present danger. What then have I to gain? Yes," he continued, placing his hands together in an imploring manner. "I have something to gain, and that is your—I will not say love, but forgiveness for the injuries I have already done you, as truly as I have endangered the life of your father before I knew you, and loved you not. Ay, Teresa, contemptible as you may think me, I do love you even better than life itself, as I am willing to prove to you, and that without hope of return, and I am now anxious to do all I can to make some compensation for the misery I have caused."

Teresa made him no answer. She could have said there was another sin he had committed, and

one of no little magnitude in the eyes of the noble-minded girl. He had succeeded in engaging her affections, and that to an extent she had not dreamed of herself, and, as she now had found, was utterly unworthy of them. She looked at him attentively for a moment, and appeared on the point of speaking; but by an effort she restrained herself, and turning her head from him remained silent. Brother Felix noticed her hesitation, and probably imagining that his words were not lost on her, he continued,—

"Why do you not answer me? Believe me, you have not a moment to lose. A few minutes more and it will be too late. Consider what I propose, and then say if it be possible for me to be actuated by an unworthy motive. I not only offer to relieve you from the torture, but to restore to you and your father liberty and life, and that almost to a certainty by the loss of my own. Ay," he continued, noticing an expression of doubt on the girl's countenance, "by the loss of my own! Once outside the Ferrarese territory, you and your father will be safe, while I, in any country where there may be a Dominican friar, or even a Romish priest, will be denounced and sent as a prisoner to Rome. As you must see, I have nothing to gain. Let me once more implore you to follow my advice, and give some false and distant address as your father's present residence; and before they can discover the truth, I shall have found means to accomplish both your own and his escape."

Teresa now turned her head towards him, and after regarding him attentively for a moment, said,—

"Listen to me, and take my answer as the only one I shall give you. Dear as my life is to me, and terrible as the torture may be that I shall suffer, I will endure it rather than either my father or myself should receive liberty at your hands. I know," she continued, seeing Brother Felix was about to speak, "what you would say. You would attempt to prove to me that I overrate both my courage and powers of endurance, but my reliance is on God, who is able to perform"—here her voice quivered, and her eyes filled with tears—"to perform greater wonders than to endow a young girl with power to support the torture that may be applied to her, and even the certainty of death afterwards, when the motive instigating her is to save the life of an honoured and much-loved parent. I would a thousand times," she continued, the gathered tear in her eye now falling down her cheek, "rather support whatever the malice of our enemies might think fit to inflict on me than obtain relief from the hands of—"

Here her voice completely failed her, and placing one hand before her eyes she wept bitterly.

"Teresa," said Brother Felix, "you know not what you will have to endure. You know not the terrible power," he continued, "of that small cord in extracting words from an unwilling witness."

Finding Teresa made him no answer, he pointed with one hand to the cord, which was slightly drawn up above their heads, while with the other he

endeavoured to withdraw the hand which covered her eyes, so as to call her attention to it. But Teresa had no sooner felt the pressure of his hand than she withdrew herself from his reach with the quickness of lightning, glancing at him with a look of intense indignation as if insulted by his touch. Instinctively the moment afterwards her eyes followed the direction of his finger which pointed to the cord, and she shuddered as she beheld it.

"A few minutes hence," Brother Felix continued, "and you will be suffering the terrible agony that simple instrument of torture is capable of inflicting, and strong as your resolution may be at this moment, it must be super-human indeed if capable of supporting it. Think but for one moment of the penalty which would await one incautious word uttered under such torment. Once more, give me an answer without delay. The time is fast approaching for the Inquisitors to arrive, and the next moment they may be here."

Judging from a shudder he saw pass over Teresa as she glanced at the cord, he imagined her courage was upon the point of failing. "Once more," he said to her, "give me an answer, and accept my offer of assistance. Promise me you will; if not for your own sake, cast one thought of pity on me. Imagine what my feelings would be, condemned to stand here and witness your suffering under the terrible torture to which you will be subjected. Hark! I hear footsteps in the corridor. One moment longer, and it will be too late. Dearest Teresa, you must feel some pity for me. Little did I know, till I judged from what I witnessed last evening, that you had for me any affection. Speak quickly, I hear the footsteps approaching."

The effect of his speech was far different from what might have been imagined. Great as her dread was at the entrance of the Inquisitors into the room, it was absorbed in her shame at finding her unworthy lover had discovered the secret of her affection for him. The sound of the steps became more clearly distinguishable in the stone passage leading to the room, and Brother Felix, in the emergency of despair, advanced towards her to take her hand, imploring her at the same time to speak. To avoid, not only his touch, but the sound of his words, she sank on one knee, and bending her head, placed her hands over her ears to shield herself from his arguments, and as she did so, she heard him exclaim, "Too late! too late!" and the door opened.

CHAPTER XXVI.—DELIVERANCE.

TERROR at the arrival of the Inquisitors was now added to her desire not to hear the persuasive arguments of Brother Felix, and she remained crouched in the same position, taking no notice of the new comers. In this way she continued for some moments, hearing nothing, when a hand was placed on her shoulder with great tenderness. Fearing the hand was that of Brother Felix, she shrank from it, when on the other side of her she felt an arm placed gently round her waist, and

a hand, evidently a woman's, take her softly by the wrist. Teresa now let her hands fall from her ears, when a man's voice, in kind accents, said—

"Come, my daughter; have courage. Do not be alarmed."

"Teresa, my child," said a kind female voice, well known to her, "rise up, you have nothing to fear. We have come to take you with us."

Teresa now, with the assistance of the arm which had been placed round her, rose from her knees, and gazed with astonishment at those near her. On one side, with real kindness and sympathy expressed on his countenance, stood the Jesuit Pelletario, on the other, Madonna Bonifacio, the governess of the Princesses, a lady who had always felt, notwithstanding the difference of their creed, a marked affection for the beautiful and amiable heretic girl. Completely bewildered, Teresa had great difficulty in realising the position she was in. Madonna Bonifacio, seeing her surprise and confusion, clasped her in her arms, kissed her affectionately, and said—

"My child, recover yourself, for we have come to take you with us. His Highness having heard where you were, has sent an order for your release, and the Duchess has sent her *carretta* for you, which is now waiting below."

Teresa, through the kindness of Madonna Bonifacio, somewhat recovered herself; but the presence of the syndaco, who was also standing there, appeared still to keep her in doubt. Noticing the inquiring look she cast on him, the syndaco said to her—

"It is quite true." Then showing her a piece of parchment, he continued, "It is perfectly true. I have this morning had the happiness to receive the order for your release, signed by his Highness himself. Here it is."

Before answering a word, Teresa glanced round the room, and saw Brother Felix standing near the window, apparently occupied in looking at something which was taking place below. At that moment the Dominican monk who had acted as Oriz's secretary the evening before, and a lay brother of the order, entered the room. The secretary appeared greatly surprised to see Pelletario, and although the two monks saluted each other with the greatest courtesy and humility, but little love appeared to be lost between them.

"Excuse me, my brother," said the Dominican, noticing that Pelletario and Madonna Bonifacio, in company with Teresa, were about to leave the room, "Excuse me, but is there not some little mistake in your removing a prisoner in custody of the Holy Office?"

The Jesuit, with great blandness in his manner, but a certain expression of triumph in his countenance, possibly indicating that he was master of the position, replied to the Dominican—

"I think, my Reverend Brother, that our proceedings are perfectly regular. The prisoner was first arrested on a charge of having broken the sanitary laws of the city, nor am I aware that any charge of



"SHE SANK ON ONE KNEE, AND PLACED HER HANDS OVER HER EARS."

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heresy has been formally entered against her. Is not that so, worthy syndaco?"

"She was first arrested on the charge of breaking the sanitary regulations," replied the syndaco.

"And was till a moment since," Pelletario continued, laying particular expression on the last words, "a prisoner of the civil authority?"

"Quite true, Reverend Father," said the syndaco.

"And you have also the order for her immediate release, signed by his Highness the Duke?"

"I have, Reverend Father; it is true."

"Show it to my Reverend Brother." Then turning to the Dominican he said, "You will see that we are perfectly in order. Should, however, any little irregularity unwittingly have occurred, the Holy Office have but to apply to his Highness, who, as a true son of the Church, will give any communication he receives from such a quarter his profound attention. Will you excuse me, Reverend Brother, if I leave you? Her Highness is expecting us."

Notwithstanding his great command of feature, the Dominican secretary could not conceal his surprise at the Jesuit's words. Making an effort to recover himself, he said—

"Good morning, my Reverend Brother. Of course it will be my duty to inform his Reverence the Chief Inquisitor of what has taken place."

"By all means, Brother," said Pelletario, with great suavity in his tone. "Pray inform him of all, that no mistake may hereafter arise from any concealment." And politely making room for Madonna Bonifacio, who was supporting Teresa, to go before them, he bowed obsequiously to the Dominican, and then changing the expression of his countenance with great rapidity, he cast one glance of intelligence, mixed with stern displeasure, on Brother Felix, and left the room.

They now descended into the courtyard of the Palace of Justice, where the splendid carretta of the Duchess was standing, to carry them the short distance from thence to the Este Palace. The officials in the courtyard, as well as the servants in attendance, could not refrain, notwithstanding their habitual good training, from casting a curious and anxious glance at the poor girl who a few minutes before had been about to undergo the torture, and who was now being escorted as a guest to the Ducal Palace by the two persons of the highest importance in the Duchy—the confessor to the Duke, and the lady superintendent of his daughters. With some little difficulty they placed the trembling girl in the carretta; Madonna Bonifacio then took her seat by her side, and Pelletario opposite to them; and the servants having drawn the curtains, the coachman

drove on at a walking pace, a footman on each side of the carretta, and two of the ducal guard preceding it to the Palace.

Teresa, on her way, turned towards Madonna Bonifacio, and said—

"Am I then to be imprisoned with her Highness?"

"Imprisoned with her Highness?" said Madonna Bonifacio. "My dear child, you are now in perfect liberty, and the guest both of her Highness and the Duke. The Princesses have also again returned to Ferrara, and will be delighted to welcome their friend. Come, my child, look gay again. Be assured you will receive a most cordial welcome."

Pelletario also put in his word of consolation, and explained to her the great satisfaction, not only her Highness the Duchess, but also the Duke and the young Princesses, would have in again seeing her.

"I assure you," he continued, "we have all been deeply grieved at the inconveniences and sorrows which, through a current of untoward events, you have unavoidably been subjected to. But all is over now, and be prepared to meet her Highness with a cheerful countenance."

By this time the carretta had arrived at the Este Palace, and Teresa, accompanied by Madonna Bonifacio and the Jesuit, mounted the grand staircase leading to the magnificent apartments which had been ornamented in the time of the late Duke, and continued their way onward till they had nearly arrived at a small private cabinet of his wife, the late Duchess Lucrezia Borgia. Just before reaching the door of this cabinet, Pelletario, with great good taste, said to Madonna Bonifacio—

"Would it not be better that we allowed the first interview between her Highness and her friend to pass without witnesses?"

"I quite agree with you," said Madonna Bonifacio, and they then proceeded with her to the door, which an usher opened, and the next moment Teresa found herself in the presence of her illustrious patroness.

Teresa immediately rushed forward, and was on the point of flinging herself on her knees and taking the hand of her Highness, when the Duchess withdrew it, and placing it before her eyes wept for some moments in silence.

"Oh, my child!" she said, "how degraded does your presence make me appear in my own eyes!" Then placing her arm round Teresa she kissed her affectionately. Looking at her attentively for a moment, she continued, "You little know to what depths I have fallen, and the sin I have committed."



CHAPTER XXVII.—A PAINFUL MISSION.



WE must now pause to explain how it was that, while Teresa had received information of the imprisonment and cruel treatment of the Duchess Renée, she appeared to enjoy at the time of their meeting the most perfect liberty. To do this, it will be necessary to retrace our narrative to the time when

Teresa and Madonna Ponte quitted the palace of San Francesco to obtain tidings as to whether the pastor Bernardino Ochino had effected his escape.

It will be remembered that an interview took place between the inquisitor Oriz and Renée, prior to Ochino quitting the palace. Renée, strong in her own faith, set at defiance the threats of the Inquisitor, and called upon Teresa and Madonna Ponte to bear witness to her statement, that no persecution or entreaties should terrify or persuade her into a renunciation of the Protestant faith. Little, however, did the unfortunate Duchess then appreciate how terrible was the power which would be brought to bear against her. Oriz, when he heard her words, merely bowed, indicating that he fairly understood her meaning and quitted her presence. It remained only a question between them which should be the stronger. But notwithstanding the confidence Renée had in the stability of her own principles—and few indeed could have had stronger Protestant faith than she had—a power still greater was in the hands of Oriz.

Oriz had acquired a profound knowledge of human nature during his long experience in the office of Inquisitor—a knowledge in the present instance turned to such infamous account, that even the most bigoted panegyrist of the Inquisition has never dared to say one word in its defence. This had taught him that there was a means of crushing the spirit of the Duchess, and that by mental torture. His plans resulted in a success which constrained the unfortunate lady for a short period to abjure the Protestant faith, although at the same time he covered his own name, and that of the Inquisition itself, with well-merited opprobrium.

For perhaps half an hour after Teresa and Madonna Ponte had quitted the palace of San Francesco, Renée remained seated in the room. She sat motionless, labouring under a peculiar and inexplicable oppression aggravated by the uncertainty as to whether it might not increase in intensity. She was aware that the Princesses, not only without bidding her adieu, but without her knowledge, had quitted the palace. Whether she had been permanently deprived of their society, was a point on which she was still uncertain.

The Duchess was aroused from her meditations by the entrance of her gentleman usher, who with terror on his countenance, informed her that the Archbishop of Ferrara, attended by a reverend brother of the Dominican order, and a captain of the Ducal guard, had arrived at the palace, and demanded an audience with her Highness. The Duchess, greatly surprised at the usher's manner, and probably feeling indignant at the somewhat imperative wording of his message, although delivered with the most profound respect, was on the point of answering that it was not then convenient for her to receive them. At that moment the Dominican (who was no other than the one who had acted as secretary at Teresa's examination), along with the Archbishop and captain of the guard, entered the apartment. The Archbishop and the monk advanced with much respect towards the Duchess, while the captain of the guard, after ordering the usher to withdraw, closed the door, and in a respectful attitude stood by it, as if unwilling that it should be thought he was in any way a party to the conference about to take place.

Renée, when she saw her visitors enter, seemed about to protest against their intrusion; but the air of sorrow visible on their countenances restrained her. The Archbishop was the first to break silence.

"We have arrived," he said, "on a most painful mission to your Highness—one, in fact, which we should never have had the courage to undertake, had we not been impelled by a strong sense of duty, and a respectful affection and interest in the soul of your Highness. But a further duty still urges us. The errors professed by your Highness are not only pernicious to your own soul, but to the souls of others, encouraging many to remain in their heresy who would otherwise return to the true Church, besides impeding the action of the law, inasmuch as the equality of justice without distinction of persons, which has hitherto been one of the brightest ornaments in the jurisprudence of our country, cannot fairly be carried out upon those in a lower grade whilst your Highness is allowed to hold your errors with impunity."

"I will not enter into any dispute with you on theological matters," said Renée. "I am a poor ignorant woman, and little able to compete with a man of your profound learning in casuistry. But

let me state once for all, that poor as my power of argument may be, and terrible as may be the power which you intend to bring against me—and from the presence of that monk I feel assured that little mercy will be shown me—I intend to remain, and will remain, firm in the Protestant faith. You may now proceed with your mission. You know my answer.”

“Pardon me, your Highness,” said the Dominican, “if I assure you that you are in error in speaking as you have done of the intention of our reverend brother the Chief Inquisitor, and the other members of our body towards you. We are actuated only by good feeling. I sincerely trust that, although you may have refused to listen to the arguments of the Reverend Father Oriz, authorised as he was by your royal nephew the King of France, as well as his Highness the Duke, to address you, you will, on reflection, withdraw your opposition. We may then return home with joy in our hearts, instead of being obliged to press the painful ultimatum we are the bearers of should you still determine to persist in the errors of which you are accused.”

“May I ask you,” said Renée calmly, “what are the errors I am accused of?”

“I am instructed,” said the Dominican, drawing a paper from his pocket, “to read them *seriatim* to your Highness, and to request your answer on each separately. And pleased indeed should I be if I find you deny the truth of all or either.”

“Proceed, sir,” said Renée.

The Dominican then opened his paper and read as follows:—

“By order of the Reverend Fra Matteo Oriz, Chief Inquisitor in Ferrara, I am directed to accuse you, Renée of France and Duchess of Ferrara, of the following crimes, committed by you against the authority of our Holy Church, and to take your answers thereon.

“I. That you have heretically, and with contempt, spoken of the fasts from meat, as well as neglected to observe the feast-days ordered to be kept holy by our Church. Might I have your answer to that accusation?”

“I unhesitatingly admit it to be true,” replied Renée.

The Dominican drawing forth a pen, and dipping it in the inkhorn he carried by his side, entered on the paper he was reading Renée's answer to the charge, and then proceeded:

“II. That you have declared the doctrines of our Church to be corrupt, and that you do not believe in the authority of the sovereign Pontiff, the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Chief of Rome.”

“I admit it,” said Renée.

“III. That when holy and learned men have visited you, and with indisputable argument have proved to you that the Roman Catholic Church is the true Church, you have not only denied it, but have spoken in terms of approbation of the doctrines of sacrilegious men, such as John Huss, Martin Luther, and John Calvin.

“IV. That you have brought into Italy many books, and after having caused them to be translated into Italian at a great cost, the said books containing fearful errors and atrocious blasphemy against the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

“V. That you have permitted persons in your suite to omit reciting the office of the most blessed Virgin Mary, admitting their pretext that as they did not understand Latin, no advantage could be derived from their prayer.

“VI. That you have further spoken against the sacramental confession, and said that it was better to confess to God without the intervention of the priesthood.

“VII. In speaking of the adoration of the Holy Virgin and the saints, you have said that adoration should be given to God alone.

“VIII. That you have declared the sacrifice of the mass to be idolatrous and abominable.

“IX. That you have spoken with contempt of the practice of visiting, barefooted, the shrines of the saints who are now in Paradise.”

Several other accusations were brought against Renée, such as her having stated that the Virgin Mary was nothing more than the most honourable among women; that in the sacrament the wafer did not contain the true body and blood of Christ; that the Popes, in giving authority to the Inquisition to convert, banish, or exterminate heretics, acted in the spirit of demons, and were the successors of Cain and Judas.

Renée having unhesitatingly admitted the whole of these accusations, the Dominican then said, with an expression of sorrow in his tone—

“Then, in the name of our Reverend Father Oriz, Chief Inquisitor in the Faith in the Duchy of Ferrara, I arrest you, Renée of France, on the charge of heresy; but, in respect to your rank, I deliver you into the custody of the captain of the Ducal guard, who will hold you as a prisoner till your punishment has been decided on.”

The officer of the guard now advanced, and with much respect informed Renée that she must consider herself his prisoner.

“I am ready to obey you, sir,” said Renée. “What is it you wish me to do?”

“I must ask your Highness to accompany me to the castle, where it will be my painful duty to place you in seclusion. A carriage is waiting for you below, so that no time need be lost.”

Renée without hesitation professed her readiness to follow him, and they descended to the entrance door. Here a numerous body of servants, both Protestant and Catholic, many of them with tears in their eyes, were assembled, and saw her leave the building. She then, with the Archbishop and the Dominican, entered the carretta, which immediately drove off in the direction of the castle, escorted by a body of cavalry.

Immediately after the Duchess had quitted the palace the whole building was surrounded by soldiers. Several officers of the Inquisition entered it, and commenced the search for Ochino (who,

as the reader is aware, had already escaped); while others, at the same moment, were employed in searching the house of Biagio Rosetti. Although neither the Judge nor Ochino were found, the buildings themselves remained in possession of the Holy Office, to await the future orders of the head Inquisitor.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—RENÉE'S FALL.

THE apartments appointed as the prison of Renée in the Castle of Ferrara, consisted of two small plainly-furnished rooms, looking out on the courtyard, and opposite to the spot where the statue of Leonello formerly stood. Blinds had been prepared in such a manner that she could not see or be seen from her windows, either from the court below or from the upper apartments of the castle. On entering them she was introduced by the captain of the guard to a respectable but stern-looking woman who was to act as her only servant. The captain of the guard (for the Archbishop and the Dominican had quitted her after escorting her to the prison) then explained to the woman, in Renée's presence, the duties she was to perform, adding that any omission on her part would be punished with the utmost severity. She was to obey her Highness implicitly in all matters respecting her personal service, but she was not to be the means of bringing, or allowing any person to bring, any message or letter to the Duchess; and should she observe any disposition on the part of her Highness to disobey the rules given her, she was immediately to give notice to the officer on guard. When her Highness wished to be alone in the inner chamber she was on no account to follow her, or to enter it, but to confine herself solely to the outer room. Should she have any communication to make, she could do so by speaking to the sentinel on guard through the small wicket which had been placed on the door, and through which their food would be passed, as the door of the prison would only be opened in presence of the captain of the guard, who had the key. Then, turning to Renée, with great respect, he begged that through her servant she would let him know if there was anything he could do to render her position more comfortable. She might feel assured, were it not incompatible with his duty, that he would immediately obey any command. Then, without waiting for Renée's answer, he bowed respectfully, and quitted the room.

The moment afterwards the turning of the strong lock outside the door told the unfortunate Duchess but too clearly that she was now a prisoner.

Diligently did the emissaries of the Inquisition search the Palace of San Francesco immediately after Renée had quitted it. Their purpose was to arrest Bernardino Ochino; and great indeed was their surprise and disappointment when they found he had escaped. Not only had they received positive information that he was concealed in the Palace, but the very chamber in which he slept had been indicated with such exactitude, that they

found several proofs of its having lately been occupied—pens, inkhorn, and scraps of manuscript being found there which had evidently been written by a minister of religion. These the lay brother in charge took back with him to Oriz. On his arrival at the convent he met the lay brother under whom the search had been made in the house of the Judge. Great was the surprise of each to hear that their search had been ineffectual.

On being informed of the unsuccessful result of their mission, the indignation of Oriz for a moment overcame his habitual coolness. His piercing black eye glaring with passion, as he angrily accused the lay brothers of having neglected their duty. The next moment, however, he regained his self-possession, and curtly excusing himself for his warmth of manner, merely said that he had been misinformed; and the lay brothers quitted his presence.

The door had hardly closed on them when Oriz again gave full vent to his anger. Two elements entered into his disappointment—the unsuccessful termination of his plot to entrap the arch-heretic and renegade monk Bernardino Ochino, and his conviction that Bernardino had received notice of the danger which awaited him in sufficient time to allow him to make his escape. A moment's reflection now proved to Oriz that this warning had been conveyed to Ochino, either directly or indirectly, by Pelletario. He remembered the peculiar expression on the Jesuit's countenance when he informed him of the strong probability of Ochino's soon being in his hands, as they were proceeding together from the Convent of the Corpus Domini to the Este Palace on their visit to the Duke. Oriz now viewed that expression as a determination on the Jesuit's part to give Ochino, his former friend, notice of the danger he was in. His annoyance was still further increased by the fact that he entertained a greater jealousy of Pelletario than of any man living. As the Duke's confessor, he divided with Oriz the supreme power which he aimed at in the direction of the ecclesiastical affairs of the Duchy. Like most men who are slowly roused to passion, Oriz was a long time in subduing his feelings, and even after mature reflection had shown him the imprudence of allowing himself to be driven from his usual calm, his anger against the Jesuit Pelletario continued unabated.

Strong as was the anger of Oriz against his rival, it in no way hindered him from carrying out his plot against the Duchess. He fully saw the value her conversion would be to the Church of Rome, as proving, as it would, that no dignitary was so high or so powerful as to be above its control. She would also by her recantation induce others to follow her example, and thus save the Inquisition a great amount of labour, for he had still sufficient discretion to perceive that it was better for the interests of the Church that heresy should be subdued with as little appearance of force as possible.

Oriz now commenced systematically to break

down the spirit of the Duchess. In this he might possibly have been instigated by her challenge that no power he could employ should induce her to prove faithless to her creed. The mind of Renée was too much bewildered on the day of her arrival at the castle thoroughly to estimate how completely she was in the power of the Inquisitor. The following day, however, she had good proof of it. Determining to submit with patience to the injustice practised on her, she next morning told the woman in attendance to request that the Bible and different books of devotion which had been left in the Palace of San Francesco might be sent to her. The woman conveyed the message to the guard. He in his turn gave it to his superior officer, who communicated it to the Inquisitors. It was some hours before Renée received any reply. A messenger then arrived from the Dominican Convent informing her that the books she required having been examined by the officials of the Holy Office, were found to be heretical, and as such ordered to be immediately destroyed. The messenger continued, that the Reverend Father Oriz, Chief Inquisitor, from an earnest wish for the welfare of the soul of the misguided Duchess, had forwarded her several Catholic books of devotion, which he trusted she would read and profit by.

Renée indignantly refused to receive the books sent to her by Oriz. As her anger subsided, she perceived the deplorable condition she was in, deprived as she was not only of her Bible, but of several Protestant devotional works she highly prized, and among them one which had been dedicated to her by John Calvin. She now devoutly prayed that God would support her in her affliction, and give her strength to bear with patience whatever He might ordain. But here she found a new source of torture had been prepared for her. On more than one occasion the woman in attendance had interrupted her in her prayers—respectfully enough it is true—and advised her to adopt those in use among members of the Romish faith.

On the third day the door was opened by the captain of the guard, and the Chief Inquisitor entered the room.

Renée received him with dignity, and asked by what authority he intruded himself into her presence.

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Oriz with great calmness, "I am sorry if my visit is disagreeable. At the same time allow me to remind you that for the present, and I trust for only a short time longer, our relative positions are somewhat changed. My duty alone has induced me to visit you, and humbly and earnestly to implore you to listen to the arguments which I shall bring forward to prove to you how injurious, not only to your own soul, but to those of your subjects is your present perverse behaviour."

"Once more, sir," said Renée, "I tell you I will hear no arguments you have to offer. I am resolved, as I told you when first we met, to remain true to my faith, and bitterly as I may feel the cruelty you have practised on me in taking my

children from me, I trust God will give me power to bear it. For imprisonment I care little; at the same time you would oblige me by requesting the attendant you have placed over me not to interfere with me or to interrupt me in my devotions. If I am not likely to succumb to your arguments, it is not probable that those of an uneducated though well-meaning woman will have any effect on me."

"I much regret, madam," said Oriz with great politeness, "that she should in any manner have interfered with your devotions. I trust you will pardon her, as she meant well. At the same time I promise you that this evening she shall be removed. I will now leave your Highness, and hope the next time I visit you to find you in a better frame of mind."

Oriz now left the room. About two hours afterwards the door again opened, and a woman of mature age, in the dress of a nun, entered the prison, stating that she had been sent by the Reverend Father Oriz to remain with her Highness in place of the person to whom she had objected. The sight of the nun's costume convinced Renée that she was still to be subjected to a system of persecution. But, considering it beneath her to complain, she received the nun's salutation with courtesy. The woman who had hitherto been Renée's companion then left the room, and the door was immediately closed and fastened.

Renée examined her new companion somewhat attentively. Although bigotry seemed stamped upon her face, at the same time it wore an expression of great intelligence, mixed with kindness. Her voice was clear and sympathetic. So pleasing were her manners, that in a short time Renée's repugnance considerably vanished. The nun during the first day spoke not a word on religious subjects, or alluded in any way to Renée's imprisonment, behaving to her with the same courtesy as she would have shown had the Duchess been at liberty.

When they retired for the night, the nun not only abstained from disturbing Renée in her devotions, but performed her own so quietly and unobtrusively as to be unnoticed by Renée. Next morning she found a small crucifix and a cup of holy water placed over the nun's bed, but nothing in the behaviour of her companion was to be objected to. The Duchess soon began to feel interested in the nun, who, without the least attempt to obtrude conversation on Renée, willingly spoke on any subject broached by her Highness.

The two following days passed over without any visit from Oriz. The nun the while continued to increase in Renée's favour, so much so indeed, that several times the Duchess had spoken of her imprisonment, the harshness she had experienced at the hands of the Inquisitor, and the sorrow which she felt at being separated from her daughters. When the latter subject was touched on, the nun showed great feeling. She strongly sympathised with Renée, saying that before she became a nun she had been married herself, and had two daughters, both of whom had died. So she could easily

imagine how great must be the sorrow of the Duchess at being parted from her children, especially under such painful circumstances.

The next visit of Oriz was of shorter duration than the former one. Renée implored him to give her some information respecting her daughters, and when they would be permitted to visit her.

"I greatly regret," said Oriz, "that I cannot obey your Highness, either by allowing your daughters to visit you, or by giving you any information regarding them. Much as I grieve for your sorrow at their absence, it is my duty to watch over the welfare of their souls."

"But they are my daughters," said Renée indignantly, "and by what right does your Church separate parent from child?"

"Your Highness is in error," said Oriz emphatically. "In the eyes of God they are not your children. You are now under the greater excommunication of the Church, which dissolves the relationship between a parent excommunicated for heresy, and a child still a member of the Church."

Renée looked at him sternly for a moment, and then said,—

"Is a Church which claims such a power as that entitled to the respect of any woman in whose heart God has placed the natural affection of a parent towards a child? Leave my presence, sir. Oh! never till this moment did I feel the loss of my power. Would that I could order you to be cast forth for using in my presence so blasphemous a remark!"

Oriz appeared quite impassive under the anger of the Duchess, and, bowing respectfully, left the room.

During the remainder of the day little conversation passed between the nun and Renée. On the following morning the spirit of the poor Duchess broke down as she spoke to the nun of the sorrow she felt in being separated from her children, and she wept bitterly. The nun sympathised with her; but, at the same time, would not admit that the Church had not the power to separate a child from an excommunicated parent. And yet the nun's objections were made with so much gentleness and persuasiveness that Renée listened to them without the anger she would have felt had they been uttered in the sterner manner of Oriz.

When the Inquisitor next visited her, Renée insisted upon her right to see her daughters, threatening that if it were further refused she would appeal to the Duke her husband. She felt convinced that he would not allow her any longer to be deprived of their society. Oriz calmly told her that his Highness, like a true son of the Church, had willingly submitted to her authority. He had placed the whole matter in the hands of the Holy Office, promising not in any manner to interfere with it, and had most faithfully kept his word. He would not disguise from the Duchess that her husband suffered bitterly because of her obstinacy, still he remained faithful to the pledge he had given. Renée then inquired how long her imprisonment was to endure.

"Until your Highness repents and returns to the Church."

"And are my daughters taught to consider me as dead to them?" said Renée.

"They are being taught to consider you, not only as dead, but unworthy of respect so long as your Highness shall continue in your present frame of mind," said Oriz. "Still, with the charity inculcated by our Church on her children, they are permitted to pray that you may be released from the bonds of Satan, and again restored to the Church."

For some days afterwards Renée continued to be overpowered by terror at the threat of Oriz, that she would never again be allowed to see her children. She, however, was able to treat with contempt that portion of it which indicated that she should not meet them in heaven. The nun, from time to time, pointed out to her that each day that her daughters were separated from her, the stronger would their aversion become to the errors she had fallen into.

The mind of Renée now began to sink under the persecution she was enduring.* Her anxiety and agitation increased, and she gave way to alternate fits of depression and excitement, till at last she appeared to be almost bewildered. One morning when she left her room, although still maintaining her dignified demeanour, her countenance wore an expression of stern determination. Without answering the nun's inquiries as to whether she had slept well, she requested the attendance of the Father Pelletario. The nun was at first startled, but, recovering herself, asked whether her Highness would not prefer to see the Reverend Father Oriz.

"My orders were," said Renée imperiously, "to see the Father Pelletario."

The nun, without hesitation, gave the order to the sentinel, and Renée then retired to her room, to await the arrival of the Jesuit Father. He remained with her only a few moments, and then left, saying that he would shortly return. He did so soon afterwards, in company with the Duke, and they both entered Renée's room.

"I have the happiness to inform your Highness," said Pelletario, "that the Duchess has seen the error of the doctrine she had adopted, and is again a member of our Holy Catholic Church."

Renée, still in a feverish state of excitement, said—

"True, I am a Catholic," but immediately afterwards added, "Not of Rome."†

Pelletario was too proud of his success to make any objection to the last remark, and, in fact, pretended not to hear it. In the afternoon of the

* An intense affection always existed between Renée and her daughters. Anna, her eldest daughter, wife of the bigoted Duke of Guise, even after her mother had again abjured the Catholic faith, and, having returned to France, acted as protectress of the persecuted Protestants, continued faithfully attached to her. Her daughter, Eleanor, who died young, and whose name is so frequently mentioned in connection with the unhappy passion of the poet Tasso, showed, by a codicil in her will, the affection she entertained for her mother to the last. Among many legacies bequeathed to different religious corporations, and to her friends, she left to Madame de Ferrara, her mother, an emerald brooch, as being of her worldly goods the object she most highly prized—"Come cosa più cara che habbia."

† Her words were—"Io sono Cattolico ma non Romano."

same day Renée confessed and attended mass in the private chapel of the Palace. In the evening the Princesses returned to Ferrara, and most affectionate was the meeting between the Duchess and her daughters. Indeed, so great was her joy, that at the moment she seemed wholly to have forgotten the recantation she had made. The Duke behaved with great kindness and amiability to his wife and daughters, and the evening passed happily in the family circle.

CHAPTER XXIX.—TERESA'S PETITION.

WE now return to the meeting of Teresa and the Duchess. After the first burst of their emotion had somewhat subsided, Renée related to Teresa the events which had occurred since she had seen her. For some time Renée attempted to excuse herself for her recantation. She succeeded so indifferently, however, that Teresa perceived that she was unable to admit to herself that there was any force in the arguments she used to convince her listener. When the Duchess had concluded, both remained silent for some moments. Suddenly Renée burst out with—

"Teresa, my child, do not let the arguments I have used hold me excused in your mind, for I am myself convinced of their unsoundness; still pity me, for I am worthy of pity. I am a mother and tenderly attached to my children. The affection I bore them was, contrary even to my own belief, greater than my attachment to the Protestant creed. The Chief Inquisitor cunningly detected my weak point, and tortured me upon it with so much cruelty, that at last my courage broke down. I renounced my faith that I might again have the happiness of clasping my dear children to my heart. May God forgive the sin I have committed! He is all merciful, and may have compassion on me. The bodily torture with which I was at first threatened, I could have borne, though probably, after the weakness I have now shown, you may think I should have failed even then. Possibly I might have been able to bear the separation; but when, day by day, I was told that they were being systematically taught to hold me in aversion, and that every lesson they received appeared to take firmer root in them, they must be cruel indeed who would not look on my fault with some forbearance!"

"But surely," said Teresa, "your Highness is not a Catholic in your heart?"

"No, child," said the Duchess, rising from her seat, her countenance wearing an expression of great determination, "No, child, there is not in Ferrara a warmer Protestant than I am at heart, and in that faith I will continue. To-morrow, or the following day at latest, I shall leave Ferrara for Beiriguardo, where for the future I shall reside, so that I may be screened as much as possible from public observation, and, I fear, in the eyes of all good Protestants—execration. And now, my child, tell me how you have fared since I saw you last."

Teresa now related to the Duchess her adventures. She and Madonna Ponte had heard the proclamation which denounced as heretics all the attendants of her Highness. She told how they had afterwards been conducted by a stranger to the house of the blind widow, and of the illness and death of Madonna Ponte. She then described the manner in which she had heard from Gerolamo of the place of her father's concealment, her subsequent imprisonment and adventures with the Inquisitors. All this she narrated with great clearness, saving the episode with Fra Felix, which she smoothed over considerably. Teresa next expressed her anxiety respecting her father, and begged the Duchess to obtain for her, if possible, some information concerning him; for she knew that if he once fell into the hands of the Inquisitors, little mercy would be shown him.

"Depend upon it, my child," said the Duchess, "immediate inquiries shall be made respecting him, and every protection afforded him. I will speak to his Highness, who, I am sure, will at present grant me any request I may make. I have no doubt your father will be able to quit the territory, for it would be too dangerous for him to remain here."

"But," said Teresa, "he may be already arrested, and if so, he will certainly be condemned to death."

"Admitting that he were arrested," said Renée, "I think, Teresa, the power of the Duke is quite strong enough to release him. But now tell me what news have you heard of the pastor Ochino?"

Teresa replied, that during her imprisonment she had more than once heard from those confined beside her, that Ochino had effected his escape into the Venetian territories, but beyond that she knew nothing.

"Neither do I," said the Duchess. "Indeed I know nothing of what has taken place during my imprisonment in the castle; and, Teresa," she continued, speaking slowly and emphatically, while the tear gathered in her eye, "I dread to inquire. I feel certain terrible deeds of cruelty have been done, while I was unable to protect those that suffered! I dread to make inquiry, lest I should hear that those whom I loved and respected have perished, or, as in my own case, have shown themselves no true soldiers of the cross. All my consolation is, that now I am at liberty, I shall be better able to succour those suffering for conscience' sake; and my first effort, Teresa, shall be to protect your father. I expect the Duke will shortly arrive, and I will speak to him on the subject."

After a little further conversation, Madonna Bonifacio entered the room. Renée having expressed her desire to receive the Princesses, Madonna Bonifacio retired, and in a few minutes returned in company with them. The Princesses Lucrezia and Eleanora, before paying their respects to their mother, advanced towards Teresa, and each kissed her affectionately. They afterwards conversed with Teresa with great animation, doing all in their power to impress upon her the pleasure

they felt in seeing her again at liberty. In a short time the Duke entered the room, and welcomed Teresa with great cordiality. When he had said a few words of encouragement and kindness to her, the Duchess told him that she wished to speak to him in private, and the Princesses and Madonna Bonifacio retired to another part of the room.

"I have a great favour to ask your Highness," said Renée, "and I trust you will grant it."

"It would be difficult to imagine a favour which you could ask, and which I would not grant," said the Duke.

"It is on a subject of greater interest to Teresa than to me," said Renée, "for it relates to the safety of her father."

The Duke, turning towards Teresa, said,—

"And is your father at present in Ferrara?"

Teresa remained silent, casting a glance of alarm towards Renée, as if meekly appealing to her for support. The Duke understood her, and continued,—

"Nay, my child, you need not be afraid. I have nothing but kindly feelings toward your father. Much as I regret his religious views, I have a profound respect for his integrity and learning. In every respect he has proved himself an upright Judge, and a more honoured character it would be difficult to imagine. He is, however, I am sorry to say, accused of having harboured in his house the ex-general of the Capuchins, and assisted him in escaping."

The Duke here stopped for a moment as if some difficulty had occurred to him.

"But how is it," he said, at length, "that your father should be at present in Ferrara, when so great an intimacy existed between him and Ochino, who has escaped? We have reason to believe that they left Ferrara together, and it is hardly likely they would separate. Should your father be found in company with Ochino, even my power to protect him might be in vain."

"I think I can easily explain that matter," said Renée. "The Count Biagio Rosetti has evidently returned to Ferrara to protect his child."

"The reason appears to be a good one," said the Duke. "Be assured, Teresa, I will do all in my power to protect him."

Then, turning to an usher, the Duke told him to request the immediate attendance of the captain of the guard. The usher left the room and shortly afterwards returned with the captain.

"You know the features of the Judge Biagio Rosetti," said the Duke, "and would recognise him when you see him?"

"Certainly, your Highness," said the captain.

"He is at present in Ferrara," said the Duke.

"I wish you to find him out, and, while treating him with every mark of respect, conduct him as though under arrest to the Belvedere Palace, where you will see that everything is prepared for his accommodation, and that he is well cared for in every way consistent with his safe custody. That done, let it be reported to me without loss of time. Bear

in mind that I wish the utmost secrecy to be observed in this affair."

"As great secrecy is to be observed, I had better, I suppose, make the arrest after dark; but I am not aware where the Count resides."

"True," said the Duke, "I had forgotten that." Then, turning to Teresa (who was talking to the young Princesses), he told her to inform the captain of the guard where her father was at present.

With some little difficulty Teresa described the position of the cabin which the blind widow lived in, and the captain of the guard immediately left on his mission, promising that he would report to his Highness in the evening all that had taken place. Teresa, with a lighter heart than she had experienced for some time past, spent the remainder of the afternoon in the society of the Ducal family.

CHAPTER XXX.—AN ARREST AND RE-UNION.

THE Becca-morti, ever since Pedretti had given Teresa in charge to the syndaco, had felt a kind of grudge towards him, and had taunted him for being a spy. This Pedretti so resented, that in one or two instances there was an approach to a fight. Because of the dispeace thus caused, Pedretti was transferred to the Lazzaretto, where his duties were to assist in the removal of the dead bodies, and to make himself useful on the male-side. The very morning after Pedretti's entrance, Madonna Ponte died; and her body was, of course, turned over to Pedretti to be removed to the cemetery. On the body Pedretti found a Protestant prayer-book, bearing an inscription which he could not read, and an embroidered velvet purse with a red clasp, and containing several ducats. The former he wished to deliver up to the Holy Office, and for that purpose went to the doctor, whom he found with the syndaco-substitute. The substitute, who seemed to have marked him as the man who gave Teresa in charge, put many difficulties in the way of his getting access to the Holy Office. Pedretti was therefore compelled to tell his business, and delivered up the prayer-book, which he had guessed had belonged to one of the Este family from the white-eagle crest in the outside. The substitute, on opening it, found written on the fly-leaf:—

"Alla Madonna Ponte,

"Renée de Francia,

"Duchessa de Ferrara."

The substitute pressed rather close with his questions, for Carlo persisted in his right to a reward; and as he was at last compelled to acknowledge that the book was not the only thing he had found on the body, the substitute threatened to search him. Carlo terrified, delivered up the purse, which was the signal for the physician to interpose. "Stay one moment," he said, "this affair is within my jurisdiction." Then turning to Carlo, he continued, "You have committed the gravest offence that can be perpetrated in the Lazzaretto short of murder, and you shall receive for it the punishment you merit."

A cry of terror now escaped from the wretched

old man, and he abjectly implored forgiveness. It was in vain, however; he was led away to a cell used as the Lazzaretto prison, there to await his execution the next morning. In the course of the day, however, the physician took a milder view of the offence, and ordered instead of death a singular punishment, which had frequently been inflicted on notorious thieves in Ferrara since the days of Duke Borso.

Next morning Carlo Pedretti, after having the tip of his nose amputated, that he might be recognised should he return, and a few pence given him to prevent his dying of starvation, was landed on the further bank of the river and banished from the Duchy, with the assurance that, if ever he were again found in the Ferrarese territory, he would infallibly be hung.

The prayer-book and purse were, of course, duly handed over to the Holy Office.

We must now return to the Judge Biagio Rosetti. As the reader is aware, he has remained concealed under the roof of the blind widow since he quitted the house of Giacomo the ferryman. And happy was the poor woman to be able to afford him all protection and shelter. From time to time Giacomo, the ferryman, brought news of what was taking place in Ferrara. It was some days, however, after Teresa's arrest before her father was aware of it. True, Giacomo had heard of it from his friend Gerolamo; but as the latter did not seem quite certain on the subject, the boatman, rightly judging that as ill news always arrives too soon, thought it better to conceal it from the Judge. The lull in the plague which afterwards occurred confined Gerolamo to the Boschetto, so that he had no opportunity of giving further information to Giacomo. And as a strict quarantine had since then been established against the entrance into Ferrara of any persons living in the suburbs, he had great difficulty in obtaining any certain information.

Day after day now passed without the Judge receiving news of his daughter, and his anxiety became intense. Several times he was about to disguise himself and enter the city at night, but the strict quarantine regulations were still kept up, and all persons passing through the gates had to appear not only before the sanitary officer, but the inspector of police. Not that there was, in a medical point of view, the slightest need for this rigorous and vexatious system being maintained. The plague had now completely subsided, but the rule was kept up at the request of the Inquisition. Under the veil of a beneficial sanitary regulation, a police inspection for the detection of denounced heretics might thus be carried on with undiminished energy and with that vigilance characteristic of the operations of the Inquisition in Ferrara.

Gerolamo and Giacomo strenuously advised Rosetti against making any attempt of the kind. They reminded him that a heavy price had been set upon his head, and fortunate indeed would be the spy who discovered him.

Rosetti could not close his eyes to the force of their arguments. Were he detected, and his arrest to become known to his daughter, it might lead to her death as well as to his own. He remembered that Gerolamo had informed Teresa of his being in Ferrara; and he rightly judged that his still being at large was a proof that his daughter had refused to inform her judges where he might be found, even if they were aware that she knew the secret. He judged, also, that in her imprisonment she was not subjected to any extreme severity; and he at last determined to remain in his present concealment rather than hazard an appearance in the city, for his detection might be most prejudicial to his daughter.

Several days passed, Rosetti's anxiety becoming greater with each succeeding day. At length the delay became unsupportable, and he once more determined to make an attempt to enter the city.

One evening soon after, the door suddenly opened, and a man entered the room. After casting a glance round him, as if to ascertain who were present, he whispered to some one outside, and then closed the door. He advanced to the Judge, and said to him, with much courtesy—

"Count Biagio Rosetti, I am ordered by his Highness the Duke to arrest you. You must consider yourself my prisoner."

For a moment Rosetti was too much startled to make any reply. The blind widow, who was seated at the opposite side of the table, recognising the presence of a stranger, cried aloud with terror. Recovering from his surprise, Rosetti, who, by the murky light of the lamp, did not recognise the features of the captain of the guard, partly concealed as they were by a hood and loose capote, replied—

"On what charge am I arrested?—I must request you to show me your authority."

"I am the captain of the Duke's guard," said the officer, "and am acting by his authority. The charge I know not. But be assured, in ordering your arrest, his Highness is actuated by no unfriendly motive. You must accompany me, for I was desired by his Highness to report to him after I had fulfilled his orders."

Rosetti, perceiving that any remonstrance would be useless, took an affectionate leave of the poor widow. He told the captain of the guard that he was ready, and they quitted the house together.

The two soldiers, who were partly dressed as civilians, followed them, and the captain of the guard, without informing the Judge to what place he was conducting him, took the road to the Belvedere Palace. On their way the Judge made one or two attempts to enter into conversation with his companion, who invariably replied to him either with evasive answers or polite refusals, under the plea that he hardly considered himself at liberty to converse with his prisoner, much as he wished to do so.

"But I beg of you to answer me one question," said Rosetti at last. "Tell me if you have heard

of my poor daughter, who, as you may know, was one of the ladies-in-waiting on her Highness?"

"I have no reason for objecting to answer that question," said the officer. "Your daughter is now at liberty, and enjoying the hospitality and protection of her Highness the Duchess."

"Her Highness the Duchess!" said Rosetti with astonishment. "I heard that her Highness had been placed under restraint."

"True," replied the captain of the guard. "Her

Highness was for some time under restraint, but having seen the error of her ways, she has again become a member of our Holy Catholic Church, and has admitted the authority of his Holiness the Pope as its visible head on earth. The Duchess was then liberated, and is at present residing with the Duke, at the Este Palace, and the Princesses have been restored to her. I saw the young lady, your daughter, in their society this afternoon."

For Rosetti there was both gall and honey in



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these words. Happy, indeed, was he to hear that his daughter was liberated, and under the protection of the Duchess; but this was strongly qualified by the fear that, following the example of her illustrious mistress, she might also have become a pervert. True, he knew her to have been strongly attached to the principles of the Protestant faith, but he could not disguise from himself that she was young and confiding, and was therefore more

likely to be swayed by the example of one whom she so much loved and respected. But his surprise at the Duchess having recanted almost for the moment got the better of his alarm, and he began to suspect that the captain of the guard must have been misinformed.

"Did I clearly understand you," he said, "that her Highness the Duchess has returned to the Church of Rome?"

"It is perfectly true," said the officer, "but excuse me if I remind you that it is hardly in accordance with my duty to converse with you on subjects connected with the Palace."

Rosetti made no further remark, and they continued their way. The porter who opened the gates seemed quite prepared for them, and had evidently been expecting them. The captain of the guard conducted his prisoner into the Palace, where they were met by a major-domo, who led Rosetti to the apartments which had been assigned to him.

"With your permission," said the captain of the guard, "I will now take my leave, as I must return to the Este Palace to report to his Highness that his orders are obeyed. Till you hear from me again, you may consider yourself at liberty to visit any part of the Palace or grounds you please, but you must not stir beyond them. I should also inform you that guards will be placed around the walls to prevent your escape. But I know you have too much respect for the wishes of his Highness to attempt it." So saying, he bowed and quitted the apartment.

Rosetti was now left with the major-domo, who inquired if he had any orders to give. On being assured that nothing would be required, he left the room. Rosetti had some difficulty in realising his position. The change of scene from the miserable hovel of the blind widow to his present residence in the Palace was very great; but the change in his daughter's case was still greater; for only an hour before he had supposed she was incarcerated in the dungeons of the Palazzo della Ragione. But at what price had these extraordinary changes been effected? Could any reward or other temptation have induced his dear daughter to change her religion? A thousand times better that she should have remained a prisoner than have sought safety for herself and her father by the sacrifice of her soul's welfare.

Again and again he reflected on the subject. The only hope remaining to him was that the love of the Duchess and her children for Teresa might possibly induce them to obtain her freedom without the sacrifice of her faith. Should he have the happiness to meet her, earnestly would he beg of her to continue true to the creed in which she had been brought up, and to refuse every temptation, no matter how brilliant and plausible, to become a convert to the Church of Rome.

Morning found Rosetti still a prey to anxiety. After his breakfast he quitted the Palace to enjoy the fresh breeze blowing across the river. He remained here for some hours, when a servant approached him and said that his presence was required in the Palace. Rosetti inquired who wanted him. The servant believed it was the captain of the Duke's guard. Rosetti now returned, and found his daughter Teresa, accompanied by Madonna Bonifacio, awaiting him. In a moment parent and child were in each other's arms.

"Oh! my dear father," said Teresa, when she

had somewhat recovered herself, "how terrible has been my anxiety respecting you!"

"Not more so, my child, than mine has been on your account. Thank God, we have met at last. Is it true that you have been imprisoned?"

"Quite true," said Teresa. "I was only liberated yesterday when I was about to undergo the torture by order of the Inquisition."

Rosetti, taking his daughter's hand, looked at her anxiously for some moments, as if wishing to put a question, and yet afraid to ask it. Summoning up courage, he at last said, his voice faltering—

"Teresa, my child, what price was paid for your liberation?"

"Price, my dear father?" said Teresa: "I hardly understand you. I was liberated by the Duke at the request of her Highness and the Princesses, solely because of the love they bear me."

"Thank God, my child, thank God," said Rosetti, with a sigh of contentment.

Although Teresa did not understand her father's allusion, Madonna Bonifacio did.

"Yes," she said to him, "Teresa is right. The love they bore her induced them to demand her liberation. I think I fully understand you. You feared that she had become a member of our Holy Church. That she may do so in the end I devoutly pray; but I may tell you that his Highness the Duke has especially ordered that her religion shall not be interfered with. Like ourselves, he hopes that she will of her own accord acknowledge the truth of our creed. But let me change the conversation," she continued. "I am directly commissioned by his Highness and the Duchess, to advise you without delay to leave Ferrara. You have already been denounced by the Inquisition, and should you fall into their hands a very severe fate might await you. His Highness proposes that until you have determined in what part you will take up your residence Teresa should remain under the care of the Duchess, with the full assurance that her religion shall be respected. As all your possessions have been confiscated, you may possibly be in want of money, and I am directed by her Highness to put this purse in your hands, and to assure you, that when you require more you have only to make known your wish by letter, and more shall be forwarded to you."

Rosetti willingly accepted the offer, and most gratefully thanked the Duchess for her kindness. He at once determined that his destination should be Zurich.

Teresa remained for some hours with her father, and then took an affectionate farewell of him, requesting him to write to her on every possible opportunity, and promising that she would herself be a good correspondent. The carretta was then ordered to be in readiness, and after one more long embrace the father and child separated.

Rosetti remained only a short time in solitude after Teresa's departure, for the captain of the guard entered and asked him whether he wished to leave the Ferrarese territory. Rosetti told him that he

did, and the officer said, that in that case the sooner he left the better ; for strong as the Duke's power of protection was, there were other powers in Ferrara not less so. Much as Rosetti wished to see his beloved daughter again, he thought it more prudent to give up the idea rather than run the risk of falling into the hands of the Inquisition.

The captain then asked in what direction he wished to go, and said that when he knew that he would be better able to form some plan of escape.

"My desire," said Rosetti, "is to reach Zurich, as I know that many of my countrymen are already there."

"I think then your better plan would be to get some one to accompany you, on whose fidelity you could rely."

Rosetti reflected for a moment, and would have proposed Camille Gurdon, but of him he had not been able to obtain any information. He therefore replied that the only person he felt he could trust was Giacomo, who he believed would willingly go with him.

As Giacomo was not difficult to find, the captain

of the guard sent a messenger to request his attendance. Giacomo entered willingly into the idea of accompanying the Judge to Zurich. He could leave his ferry, he said, in charge of his brother-in-law, and, possibly after a few months' absence, he might be able to return to Ferrara without being in so much danger as he was at present.

Although the captain easily understood his allusion, he made no remark, but merely asked Giacomo if he should be willing to start that evening. The ferryman said he should like nothing better ; and after nightfall he promised to be with his boat at the landing-place opposite the palace, to ferry the Judge across, and they could then continue their course through Mantua to the mountains.

All being agreed on, Giacomo left the Palace, and the captain remained with Rosetti the rest of the day. At night they proceeded to the river-side, where they found Giacomo, true to his appointment, waiting for them. The Judge, after giving the captain many messages to Teresa, bade him farewell, and the next moment the boat pushed off from the shore.



CHAPTER XXXI.—THE INQUISITOR ON THE RACK.



IT was because of ill-health, and not from any want of interest in Teresa's examination, that Oriz was not present at the Palace of Justice on the morning of her liberation. Forsome days he had been suffering severely. He had not enjoyed a day's perfect health since Renée had been arrested, and

his malady had gradually increased in severity. Of the nature of his disease no one could form an opinion. He did not complain, but bore his sufferings with great fortitude. At last his pallid countenance and drooping form so testified to the progress of his disease, that his brother monks began to be anxious. To their inquiries he always replied that nothing ailed him. Yet his answers, though given with courtesy, were remarkable for more than usual brevity; and there was in them a tone of anger which did not encourage his friends to renew their solicitations.

One evening Oriz was not present at supper as usual, and a conversation arose among the monks as to the cause of his absence, all attributing it to ill-health. The general opinion was that the extraordinary attention lately given to the duties of the Holy Office by their Reverend Brother had been more than his constitution could sustain. In support of this opinion several of them mentioned that during the night a light was seen in the chamber occupied by Oriz, his shadow frequently passing between it and the window, as if both mind and body were employed.

Fra Theodore, who had been educated as a physician, and was the leech of the convent, urged on the monks that it was their duty to reason with their Reverend Brother on the little care he took of his health. For some time past he had observed with great alarm the change which had taken place in the Reverend Father's appearance. It was finally determined, however, to postpone any action for a few days, as they would then be better able to judge of the necessity of bringing the matter under Oriz's notice, even at the risk of incurring his displeasure.

Oriz's health, so far from improving, became

worse; but still he continued to perform without intermission his duties as Inquisitor.

All now admitted the necessity of some action being taken. Anxious to avoid exciting Oriz's anger, Fra Theodore proposed that they should first take the opinion of Dr. Ludovico Sigismondi, one of the most eminent physicians in the city. Fra Theodore said he could do this without awakening the suspicions of Oriz. He had already asked Dr. Sigismondi to assist him in the case of one of the lay brothers, who was lying dangerously ill in the convent. When the doctor came to see his patient, Theodore would bring him into the presence of Oriz as if accidentally. They could have some casual conversation with him, and from the expression of his countenance and his general appearance, the doctor might be able to form some opinion of his case.

When Dr. Sigismondi called at the convent next day, Fra Theodore told him of the anxiety of the brethren respecting Oriz's health, and requested the doctor to see him as a favour. As Oriz objected to being questioned on the state of his health, Fra Theodore said they would have to make the illness of the lay brother the ostensible reason for their visit. Sigismondi having assented, they proceeded to Oriz's room, where they found him occupied with the secretary of the Holy Office. Oriz gave them a suspicious glance. He was reassured, however, by the tact of the doctor, who informed him that his reason for calling was to ask permission for the lay brother to be taken away from the convent. The confinement was prejudicial to his health, he said, and it would be advisable to remove him from the city to the dwelling of a relative, a farmer in the mountains near Parma.

Oriz readily granted the request. He appeared to be relieved when he found that the visit was not in reference to himself, and conversed affably with the doctor for some minutes. When they had left Oriz, Fra Theodore asked the doctor what he thought of his appearance.

"He is far from well," replied the doctor, "that is evident. From the unnaturally keen and anxious expression of his eye, it appears to me that his ailment is more mental than bodily. Probably he exerts his mind too much."

"That is precisely my own opinion," said Fra Theodore.

"Then, of course, there can be but one remedy—perfect rest—and you should impress upon him the necessity of taking it."

"I would do so willingly, but unless he asks me, it would be indiscreet for me to speak to him on the subject."

In the evening Oriz was present at supper, and appeared to be more cheerful than usual. There was, however, an air of excitement about him which indicated that his vivacity was forced. More than once he spoke to Fra Theodore about the health

of the lay brother, and the opinion which Dr. Sigismondi had given. He then inquired whether the doctor had not the reputation of being a very clever man.

"No one in Ferrara stands higher in his profession," was Fra Theodore's reply.

Oriz made no further remark, but entered into conversation with some of the other monks.

Next morning he sent for Fra Theodore, ostensibly to inquire for the health of the lay brother. Hearing that he intended to quit the convent that day, Oriz made some remarks about the ability of Dr. Sigismondi, and then inquired where he resided. Fra Theodore informed him, but Oriz seemed indifferent to the reply, and the conversation turned to other subjects.

After mass at noon Oriz entered his litter, telling the bearers, in a tone loud enough to be heard by the monks who surrounded him, that he wished to be carried to the Archiepiscopal Palace. They had hardly gone half-way, however, when he stopped them, and said that he wished instead to be carried to the house of Dr. Sigismondi. Fortunately he found the doctor at home. He was received with the most profound respect, and the servant having quitted the room, the doctor quietly waited for the Inquisitor to explain the object of his visit. A singular change had come over Oriz in the presence of the doctor. His habitual calm self-possession had left him, and he appeared anxious and timid.

"You will do me a great favour," he commenced, with a tremor in his voice, "if, when you call at our convent, you will not mention my visit to any of the brethren. They are most anxious about my health, and I do not wish to alarm them," he continued, looking in the physician's face, as if to try and read there whether the statement just made was believed.

"You may rely upon my secrecy," said Dr. Sigismondi. "My confession in your ear would not be more sacred than yours will be in mine."

"I have no bodily ailment to complain of, nor any pain," said Oriz; "I am only weak and nervous."

"Can you attribute it to any cause?" said the physician.

Oriz looked at him with a doubting expression, and then hesitatingly replied,—

"I know of no cause."

"Do you sleep well at night?"

"I get but little rest," replied Oriz; and then after a moment's pause, as if he dreaded to make the avowal, "and that does not refresh me. When I rise I feel even more fatigued than when I lay down."

"You cannot sleep, then?"

Oriz hesitated a moment, and then said, "If I but lay my head on the pillow, I am asleep."

"Is your sleep disturbed by dreams, then, that you complain of being fatigued when you awake?"

Oriz, drawing his seat nearer and taking the doctor's hand, looked in his face in an imploring manner, and said, "Doctor, that is the most difficult question of all to answer. When I awake in the morning I am fully aware that I have been suffer-

ing from a terrible dream, but of its nature I have not the most remote recollection. The awful effects of the mental torture I have undergone are every morning apparent in profuse perspiration on my brows, and the complete exhaustion of my body. It is the dread of this unremembered vision, and not the indisposition to sleep, that keeps me awake. And now, doctor," he continued, rising from his seat, and clasping his hands in an attitude of prayer, "find if you can some remedy against this terrible inflection, and I will consider you the greatest benefactor I ever had."

Oriz seated himself with an expression on his countenance in which shame and anxiety were mingled—anxiety to hear the doctor's answer, and humiliation at the earnestness of his appeal. The doctor looked at him for some moments, and then said,—

"The remedy, Reverend Father, is in your own hands. You have overworked your brain, and it requires repose. Take my advice, and leave Ferrara without delay. Go to some quiet spot, and remain there till your health be re-established. You will then be able to resume your duties not only more agreeably to yourself, but with greater benefit to others. Your brain is unable to sustain such fatigue as it is at present undergoing. I could say no more if I should talk till to-morrow."

Oriz seemed much impressed with these remarks. He said that, although he was afraid the affairs of the Church in Ferrara could hardly permit of his absence, he would turn the subject over in his mind. He then took his leave, but had not reached the door when he turned back. Taking the doctor's hand in both of his, and pressing it, with great earnestness he said,—

"Doctor, promise me once more that you will not mention what has occurred between us to any of the brethren of the convent, should they hear that I have seen you."

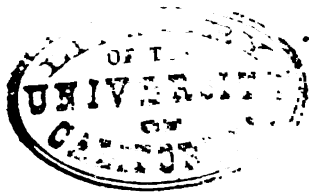
"You may be perfectly satisfied," replied Dr. Sigismondi, "that not one word of our conversation shall pass my lips."

The discovery of Teresa, which Oriz heard of on his arrival at the convent, and the probability of his now finding her father and Ochino, were of such paramount interest, that he resolved to postpone his retirement from affairs till another opportunity.

The reader is already aware of the examination of Teresa and its result. Although, to economize his strength, Oriz had sent his secretary to conduct Teresa's examination at the Palace of Justice, he had remained at home in a state of great anxiety to hear the result of her confession, that he might act upon it without delay. On hearing what had happened, his anger knew no bounds. The principal clue to his discovery of the Judge and Ochino had eluded him, and that, too, by the agency of the man towards whom he probably cherished greater animosity than towards any other—the Jesuit Pelletario. Oriz imagined that he had received from him a gross and unpardonable pro-



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vocation. Unable as he was to prove it, he yet felt convinced that the escape of Ochino had, to a certain extent, been due to his agency. To this had been added another and still more unpardonable offence. Pelletario had received the recantation of the Duchess, and had thus snatched from the hands of Oriz the honour of her conversion to the Church of Rome. And now the measure of his offence was full to overflowing, for he had taken from under the authority of the Inquisition one of its prisoners, thus setting at nought not only the powers of the Holy Office, but the Church itself.

So intense was the indignation of Oriz at Pelletario that, for the moment, he forgot the secretary's complaint about the rebellious conduct of Brother Felix, who had quitted the convent without permission, falsely stating that he had been authorised by the Chief Inquisitor to conduct an examination of a female witness in private. Too much occupied to pay any great attention to the accusation, Oriz had sufficient self-possession to know that the crime committed by Brother Felix deserved the severest punishment. He immediately ordered him to be confined in one of the dungeons of the Inquisition. The report from the Chief Inquisitor to the General of the Order was now to be placed in the hands of another brother, and Fra Felix was to accompany him to Rome as a prisoner. He would there be judged by the General of the Order, and due punishment would be inflicted.

The same day the secretary formally drew up the accusation, and next morning Fra Felix was sent under escort, a prisoner to Rome.

Oriz now turned his attention to the liberation of Teresa, and the affront offered him by Pelletario. The more he thought on the subject, the more excited he became. His eyes shone with an almost unearthly light, and he walked the room with an elasticity of step strangely different from his habitual staid pace. More singular still was the expression of his countenance. He had attained such control over the muscles of his face that he could at will subdue all symptoms of emotion. But now his face, especially the muscles round his mouth, was in incessant motion, and his lips moved rapidly, as if he were speaking on some deeply interesting subject, although not a word escaped them.

In this state he continued for a considerable time. Suddenly stopping in his walk, he observed the eyes of his secretary and Fra Theodore fixed upon him, an expression of astonishment being depicted on their countenances. In a moment he recovered himself, although evidently annoyed that the two monks had observed the state of excitement he was in. He attempted to frame some excuse, but he did this so artificially, that it seemed rather to excite than to allay their curiosity. Oriz saw that his excuse was futile, and, pleading fatigue, he hurriedly left the room and went to his own cell.

When he had closed the door, he seated himself on the bed, and, folding his arms, endeavoured to collect his thoughts and determine upon some

plan of action. But all in vain. Circumstances of the most heterogeneous description, and without the slightest connection with each other, passed through his brain with unnatural rapidity. Ochino's escape, the recantation of the Duchess, and especially the liberation of Teresa without the permission of the Holy Office, mingled themselves in his mind with the persecutions he was conducting against some of the principal heretics, and other matters. Not once, however, did his thoughts recur to the terrible dream which haunted him nightly.

At last, by a violent effort, he succeeded in concentrating his attention on Teresa's liberation. He felt that it was a premeditated affront, both to the office he held and to himself, and that it was his duty to resent it. But what steps should he take, and against whom? He thought Pelletario was the principal offender. A moment's consideration, however, convinced him that the Jesuit would shelter himself under the plea that the girl's liberation was accomplished by order of the Duke, and that therefore he was not responsible for it. The Duke, then, was the person to be applied to, and perhaps, after all, he would be more tractable than the Jesuit.

Oriz, thinking this to be the best policy, prepared to leave the convent to visit the Duke at the Este Palace. Dispensing with his litter, he quitted the convent on foot. He appeared quite indifferent to the anxious glances of the porter and some lay brothers, who watched him as he went, wondering at the unusual alacrity of his step. Onward he walked without slackening his speed till he had reached the grand entrance. One of the ushers conducted him up the great stairs to the landing-place, where he requested him to remain while he should go to inform the Duke of his arrival. Presently the usher returned with a message, saying that at the present moment he was engaged on affairs of great importance; but that if the Chief Inquisitor would wait, the Duke would soon be disengaged, and would then have much pleasure in granting him an audience.

Oriz was now ushered into a small ante-chamber communicating with two corridors. Here he had remained only a few minutes when a door opened, and Pelletario entered.

For some moments not a word passed between them, each waiting for the other to commence the attack. Oriz was the first to break ground.

"Pardon me, my brother," he said, attempting to assume a calm demeanour, although his voice trembled with anger, "pardon me, but I have in some slight way to complain of your conduct towards me."

"My conduct to you, Reverend Brother?" said Pelletario, with affected sorrow in his tone. "You surprise me! Pray tell me wherein I have offended you, that I may offer all the redress in my power. Be assured that my offence was unintentional."

"Unfortunately, I have more than one complaint against you," said Oriz. "But I will especially mention your having received the recantation of her

Highness. You were well aware that I was specially commissioned by her royal nephew, the King of France, to bring her Highness back to the true faith. It appears to me, therefore, that you, pardon me if I say it, have interposed between me and my penitent somewhat unwarrantably."

"I assure you, you are in error," said Pelletario. "I did not in the most remote manner interpose between you and her Highness."

"Did you not receive her recantation?"

"I did," said Pelletario. "But that was not through any intervention of mine. I was greatly surprised when I received her request to visit her, imagining that you, after all the consideration and care you have shown for her welfare"—this the Jesuit said with the slightest possible touch of sarcasm—"would have been the person selected by her. But excuse me if I leave you now, as I have an affair of importance to attend to. If you still have any doubts about my conduct, why not clear them up by making inquiry regarding them of her Highness? I have just left her, and I know she is alone. You would greatly oblige me if you would request an interview with her. The usher waits in the corridor, and could immediately take your message to her." So saying, he bowed to Oriz and left the room.

Oriz, on the suggestion of the Jesuit, opened the door, and, beckoning to the usher, requested him to convey to the Duchess his wish for an interview. The man without hesitation obeyed, and in a few moments returned, saying that her Highness objected to seeing him. Although the man said this with great respect, Oriz understood it to imply a direct refusal. He requested the usher to return and say that he wished to speak to the Duchess on a matter of great importance respecting his Majesty the King of France.

The usher hesitated for a moment, and then said—

"I would willingly, Reverend Father, but I dare not. Her Highness ordered me so peremptorily not to admit you, that I dare not take another message back to her."

The anger of Oriz was now so great that he had much difficulty in restraining it. Still, he had too much pride to allow the usher to see his annoyance, and he remained without further remark in the antechamber till the Duke was ready to receive him.

On being ushered in, the Duke courteously expressed his regret that he had kept the Chief Inquisitor waiting. He then inquired the object of his visit, and asked if he could in any way afford him assistance in carrying out the good work in which he was engaged.

Oriz, still burning with indignation at the refusal of the Duchess to receive him, replied, that the principal object of his visit was a most delicate and painful one. It was to request the Duke to use his influence with the Duchess that the instructions received from her nephew, the King of France, might be carried out more fully.

"You greatly surprise me by making such an

application," said the Duke. "I understood from the Reverend Father Pelletario that the Duchess had fully submitted to the advice contained in your letter of instructions. Has she not again become a member of our true Church? Why, she has attended mass with me, and has confessed, and received absolution. It appears to me this was all that was required by his Majesty, unless you have some further instructions of which you have not yet informed me, and which I shall reflect well upon before I follow," continued the Duke with considerable severity. "Although I entertain the most profound gratitude for the interest his Majesty takes in the soul of our dear Duchess, you must know the temper of the Princes of the House of Este sufficiently well to be aware of the hereditary jealousy they have of the interference of foreign Powers in their domestic or political affairs."

"I have received no further instructions than those I have mentioned to your Highness. But these, allow me to submit, have not been fully carried out. It was especially requested that her Highness should listen to my admonitions and arguments, and she now positively refuses to admit me to her presence."

"But, Dr. Oriz," said the Duke, "as the aim of your instructions was to convert the Duchess, and as that has already been accomplished, it appears to me that your further assistance is not required. Her Highness is at liberty to choose her own confessor, and has done so, and I will maintain her right to that privilege. There is, therefore, no occasion for saying more on the subject. Is there any other communication you wish to make to me?"

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Oriz, "I cannot admit that my instructions have been fully carried out. I am justified in insisting that I may have the opportunity of convincing myself that the views which have induced her Highness again to join our Holy Church have been pure and orthodox, in order that I may be able to report to his Majesty fully on the subject when I return to France."

"I should be sorry, Reverend Father, that any ill-feeling should arise between us," said the Duke. "The better way to avoid such a result will be to stop the present conversation. I will not hear one word more on the subject. If there is any other subject on which you wish to speak to me, I will give a ready ear to anything you may say."

"Still, your Highness, the subject of the conversion of the Duchess should not be closed so abruptly. If you will consider——"

"Dr. Oriz," said the Duke sternly, "I have given you my answer, and twice invited you to speak upon any other subject you please. As you appear to have no other, I consider our interview to be ended. It would be uncourteous of me to insist on your retiring, but I will do so myself," and the Duke, without uttering another word, left the room.

Oriz, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered his self-composure, quitted the Palace, and returned to the convent. On the way he turned over in his

mind how he should best be able to prove to the Duke that the treatment he had received was not such as should be accorded to an ecclesiastic holding so high an appointment as that of Chief Inquisitor. He felt that to submit quietly to such an affront would be to allow the superiority of the temporal power of the Duke over the spiritual power placed in his hands. It was his duty, he argued, to prove to the Duke that the Church was supreme; and he resolved to do so effectually, and not to stop till the proud Duchess would confess to him.

When he arrived at the convent, these thoughts still occupied his mind. Without speaking to any one, he hurriedly proceeded to the room set apart for the business of the Holy Office, passing through the one occupied by the secretary and his assistant without so much as observing them. Closing the door, he threw himself into a chair, and contracting his brows, he again turned his thoughts to the Duke's unfriendly reception, and the open affront he had received from the Duchess. He remained seated for some time as immovable as a statue. Suddenly the rigidity of his form seemed to relax, and the expression of deep thought on his countenance changed to one of wonder and alarm. It had occurred to him for the first time that during his stay in the Palace he had forgotten the principal object of his visit—the liberation of Teresa. Not a thought of it had crossed his mind, although he now remembered that the Duke had twice asked him if there was any other subject upon which he wished to speak.

The expression of wonder on Oriz's face gradually gave way to one almost of terror. Recovering himself, he rose, and opening the door of communication with the secretary's room, he hurriedly advanced to the table.

"Draw out an order," he said, "under the authority of the Inquisition, for the arrest of Teresa Rosetti, daughter of the Judge Biagio Rosetti."

The secretary, without delay, proceeded to draw out the order. So great was Oriz's haste, that even before the secretary had finished, he had taken a pen from the table and dipped it in the ink, ready to affix his signature to the warrant. Hurriedly reading it, and finding it correct, he prepared to sign it. To his astonishment he found that the pen which he had already dipped in the ink-horn was no longer in his hand. Concealing his annoyance at the somewhat ridiculous position he was in, he looked round for the pen, and saw it lying on the floor beside him. He stooped to take it up; but when he stood up he saw the pen still on the floor, and on making a second attempt found he was unable to grasp it. He rose again almost to an erect position, and, casting a look of terror on the secretary, was about to make another attempt to pick it up, when he fell senseless on the floor.

On recovering his consciousness, he found himself in his cell, with Fra Theodore and Dr. Sigismondi standing by his bed. He made an effort to speak

to them, but could not. He was labouring under an attack of paralysis of the right side. He remained in bed for some time, and was not allowed to interfere in any way with the affairs of the Holy Office. After some weeks he recovered sufficiently to be removed to a room in the convent. His bodily health, however, did not improve, and his mental powers had been greatly shaken. The terrible unremembered dream occurred to him nightly, rendering his bed an object of dread to him, and he also suffered from another mysterious punishment. He had conceived the idea that the face of a man, with an expression of terrible anger on it, was continually watching him. But the most singular part of this hallucination was, that although he knew they were the features of a man, the face itself he could not recognise. The expression of anger on it appeared terribly distinct, and whichever way he turned this awful face seemed bent upon him.

At last he thought that the dream which haunted him by day was in some way connected with the unremembered one which haunted him by night; and his mind, under this double infliction, gradually sank, till at length it reached a state of utter imbecility and helplessness.

CHAPTER XXXII.—GOOD NEWS FOR TERESA.

THREE days after the liberation of Teresa, the Duchess, with her daughters and her Court, repaired to the Palace of Belriguardo, where she continued to reside till the death of her husband Duke Ercole. She rarely afterwards visited the city, partly from the painful reminiscences connected with it, and partly from the dread she had of being seen by those who had formerly known her as a Protestant. But it must not be imagined that Renée's life at Belriguardo was one of great seclusion or hardship. She could scarcely have chosen a more delightful residence. Erected about a century before by the Marchese Nicolo, it had been enlarged and embellished by Duke Borso, and afterwards by Ercole I., the grandfather of Renée's husband. At the death of Ercole I. it became the favourite residence of his daughter-in-law, Lucrezia Borgia, then married to Duke Alfonso. Lucrezia passed a considerable portion of the nineteen years of her married life in it, and fitted it up with such exquisite taste that it was considered the most beautiful country palace in Italy. Ercole II., the husband of Renée, had also laid out vast sums of money on it. Count Annibale Romeo, who resided there for some time, says it was so vast that there were as many chambers in it as there were days in the year, and the poet Guarini wrote that B. lriguardo Palace had no equal in the world.*

From her first arrival in Italy, Belriguardo had

* This magnificent palace has since been destroyed. All that now remains of it are a few poor rooms used as a farm-house. Its demolition began about the commencement of the eighteenth century. Duke Ercole, at his death, bequeathed it, with the immense domains surrounding it, to Renée, on the condition of her remaining a good Catholic. Renée, however, immediately after her husband's death, declared herself a Protestant, and, relinquishing her splendid legacy, returned to France, where she remained till her death, a staunch defender of the persecuted Huguenots.

always been a favourite place of sojourn with the Duchess Renée, but never had it appeared more attractive than when she reached it after her recantation. Although there were in her *cortège* several individuals, such as the Jesuit Pelletario and Sister Laura the nun, whose presence she would readily have dispensed with, the ride to the Palace had a soothing effect on her mind after all the anxieties and persecutions she had lately endured.

In the *carretta* with the Duchess were the two Princesses and Teresa. In another which followed were Madonna Bonifacio, the nun, and two of the ladies of the suite. Pelletario and two other ecclesiastics on mules, and some gentlemen in waiting on horseback, followed. Although hardly coming within the range of his priestly duties, Pelletario seemed to have taken upon himself the arrangement of the whole proceedings. He did not openly interfere, but by his suggestions, whispered occasionally into the ear of the chief of the escort and the major-domo, he seemed to direct the whole.

After their arrival at the Palace, Pelletario still kept a watchful eye on all that took place. His position as confessor to the Duchess gave him great weight in the establishment, and his most trifling suggestion was acted on with implicit obedience. Teresa, before her departure from Ferrara, had resumed her duties as chief lady in waiting on her Highness. Although she was a Protestant, and as such proscribed by law, Pelletario did not raise the slightest objection, which in his official capacity as confessor to the Duchess he might have done. But he impressed on Madonna Bonifacio and Sister Laura the necessity of being always present with the Princesses when they were in the society of Teresa. When the Duchess required the presence of the Princesses, the attendants were absolved from the necessity of being present, should her Highness not wish them to be in the room.

Teresa was now almost the constant companion of the Duchess. For some days after their arrival at Belriguardo, Renée hardly ever quitted the walls of the Palace. She seemed to have an aversion to being seen by the officials who habitually resided there. Many of them had been Protestants, but she feared that they had followed her example and become members of the Church of Rome. She especially dreaded to meet these, feeling that she had done them an irreparable injustice. She knew that two of the superior female domestics had remained true to their faith. They were of French-Swiss origin, but had long resided in Italy. Being well known to be favourites of Renée, they had been allowed to remain Protestants. On the first favourable opportunity, however, they were to quit the Duchy, on the understanding that should they again be seen on Ferrarese territory they would be arrested and tried as heretics.

Singularly enough Renée seemed to have less compunction in meeting these two women than those who had become perverts to the Church of Rome. She appeared to feel that she had done

them no personal injustice. Much as she realized the degraded position she occupied in their eyes, it was nothing in comparison with the pain she felt in seeing those whom she had indirectly misled.

A few days after her arrival Renée summoned up more courage, and, accompanied by Teresa, strolled about the magnificent park and gardens, occasionally speaking to the servants, gardeners, or gamekeepers she met. These at first seemed to regard her with looks of great curiosity and sorrow. Gradually, however, they became more accustomed to her presence, till at last there was no more surprise in their manner when meeting her than there had been when she was a Protestant.

Pelletario, though rarely seen by the Duchess, kept a keen eye on her movements. To do him justice, however, he treated her with great respect, and the directions he gave were marked by delicacy and tact. Knowing well that it would be painful to Renée to receive reports of the persecutions which were being carried on against the Protestants, he took every means of preventing these from reaching her. He impressed on the Princesses, as well as on Madonna Bonifacio and Sister Laura, the necessity of abstaining from any remarks on what was taking place in Ferrara. He also advised them not to touch on religious subjects unless these were first spoken of by her Highness. Even then they were not to use one word or sentence which could in any way remind her of her submission to the Church of Rome; for Pelletario knew that it had not been dictated by any conscientious conviction. When mass was celebrated in the chapel of the Palace, Renée was rarely present. Pelletario, however, made no remarks on her absence, and if any one spoke of it in his presence he merely regretted the indisposition which had prevented her Highness from being present.

Anxious as Pelletario was for the advancement of the interests of the Church of Rome, and ready as he was to receive any convert, he made no attempt to interfere with the religious belief of Teresa. This did not arise from any indifference on his part. Probably it had its origin in a sort of tacit respect he had for the courage which the beautiful and amiable young girl had shown in maintaining her faith, and for her devotion to her father. When he met her, either alone or in company, there was a certain good-tempered humour about him, with which Teresa hardly knew whether to be pleased or angry. In spite of the courteous and pleasing manners of the Jesuit, she felt that she was a mere child in his hands, and that he knew every thought that passed through her mind. He did not allow Madonna Bonifacio or Sister Laura the nun to speak to Teresa on religious subjects. He assured them that it was much better to lead her gradually to the true faith by their example, and then, when they had so far succeeded, there would be little difficulty in completing her conversion.

For more than a month Teresa did not feel any great anxiety about her father. He had promised

to write to her as soon as he should be permanently settled in Zurich. In those days, however, men travelled slowly, and letters took a considerable time to come from Zurich to Ferrara. In the reign of the former Duke, Alfonso, something like an embryo post-office, as well as a government posting establishment, had been formed. But this extended no farther than the extremity of the Duchy of Ferrara. In the Duchy of Mantua, and in Lombardy as far as Como, means of transport were still more deficient. At Como there was not even the faintest semblance of any postal arrangement. The transmission of letters and messages up the lake and across the Splügen mountain, and over the long distance between it and Zurich, had to be confided either to boatmen or carriers, who transferred them to one another, or else they had to be sent the whole distance by private messenger.

With the limited resources at her father's command, Teresa knew that it would be out of his power to employ a special messenger. The progress of a letter from him would therefore be tardy indeed. A month passed, and another followed, and still no communication came from Zurich. Teresa now began to conjure up all imaginable reasons for the delay. At last she was informed that a man, in the dress of a ferryman, had arrived at the Palace and wished to see her. He would not give his name, nor would he say what his message was, but urged the necessity of his seeing her with so much earnestness, that in spite of his poverty-stricken appearance, the servant thought it his duty to inform Teresa of his wish.

Remembering that Giacomo, who had escorted her father to Zurich, was a ferryman, Teresa immediately ordered him to be admitted. To her great surprise, however, Gerolamo entered the room. He told her that he was the bearer of a letter to her which had been brought from Zurich by his friend Giacomo the ferryman. Giacomo would have presented it himself, but he feared that he might be watched if he came to the Palace. He had no alarm on his own account, but as he was known to be a Protestant, he feared that Teresa might be suspected, should it be discovered that he had a commission to see her.

Teresa gave but little attention to Gerolamo's words. Telling him to remain where he was till her return, she hurried off to her own chamber, that she might read without interruption the letter which her father had sent to her. After cutting the thread which bound it, she was so much agitated that it was some minutes before she could sufficiently collect herself to read the contents; and when she did so, her haste was so great that the rather glanced over detached sentences than read it through.

Finding from what she had read that the journey had been accomplished satisfactorily, and that her father's reception in Zurich had been friendly, she now read the letter carefully. Her father gave a detailed account of his journey, with the intent of tracing the route which she should take

when she had the opportunity of joining him. He told her that they had reached Mantua in a boat which Giacomo had engaged for them. From thence they went on foot to Verona; then, passing by the Lake of Como, they had crossed the mountains into Switzerland. On his arrival in Zurich, he had the great happiness of meeting his reverend friend the Pastor Ochino, who had quitted Italy in safety, after a successful sojourn in Venice, where he had received considerable contributions for his mission. Rosetti further stated that he had resolved to establish himself as an advocate in Zurich. When young he had been several years in Germany, and was well acquainted with the language, so that there would be no difficulty on that account. He was happy to say that his reputation as a lawyer stood as high in Zurich as it had done in Ferrara, and that if he had the blessing of Heaven on his endeavours, he hoped in a short time to be able to send her the funds necessary for her journey. To her discretion, and to the kindness of the Duchess, he left the task of making such arrangements as might be needful.

To Giacomo he expressed great gratitude for the assistance which he had received from him. He concluded his letter by hoping that he should soon again have the pleasure of embracing his dear child, who had shown so much attachment to him, and who had had the courage to maintain the Protestant faith in spite of all the dangers which threatened her.

Teresa, overjoyed with her letter, ran with it into the apartments of the Duchess. Fortunately she found her alone, and Renée, seeing the excited and joyous expression on the young girl's countenance, as well as the letter in her hand, guessed all.

"Teresa, my child, I congratulate you," she said, "for I easily read in your eyes that you have received pleasing intelligence. May I ask what it is?"

Teresa attempted to give a hurried outline of the contents of the letter, in which, from her impatience and excitement, she signally failed. Renée then said to her, smiling—

"If there are no secrets in your letter, I think your better plan would be to read it to me, for, candidly, as far as you have gone I feel some difficulty in understanding you."

Teresa immediately began to read the letter, stopping on more than one occasion to make comments and to hear remarks on the different points in it. All went on well till they came to the concluding paragraph, in which Rosetti commended his daughter for her courage in maintaining the true faith.

In her haste, Teresa had not thought of the dangerous ground on which she was treading, nor did she remember it till it was too late. There was a dead silence now for some moments. It was broken by Renée saying—

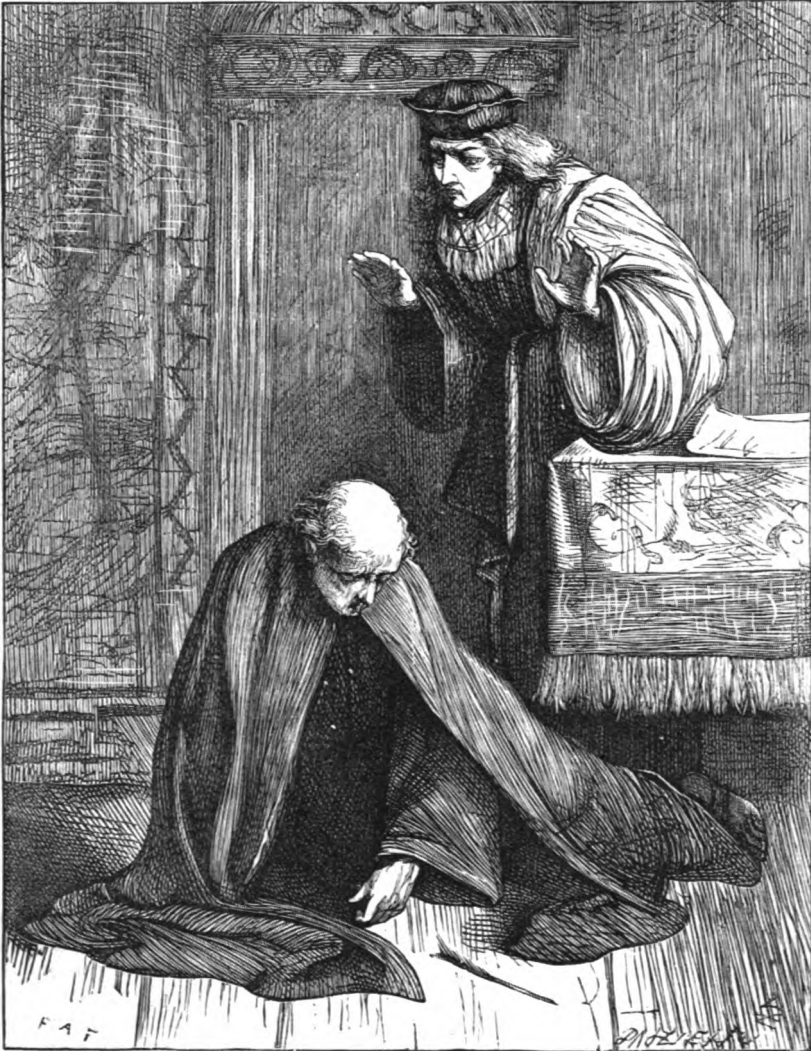
"Your father has not heard of my fall, I see, Teresa. I pray God it may not reach his ears! May he never know how degraded I am, and what an object of abhorrence I am to myself and to every member of the faith which I have deserted!"

And Renée, unable to restrain herself, burst into tears.

Teresa endeavoured to console her, and said that she was certain her Highness was still at heart a Protestant.

"My child," said the Duchess, somewhat reproachfully, "can you doubt it? At this moment I feel as great a love for the Reformed creed, and as strong a detestation of the idolatries and abominations of Rome, as when Calvin converted

me to the true faith. Before you reach Zurich, perhaps your father will have heard of my unworthy conduct. Speak of me with as much pity as you can to him, and to Pastor Ochino and his flock, for I merit it. I know, Teresa, that you think I might have followed your example and maintained my faith. But you are not a mother. When you are, probably you may find excuses for my behaviour which at present you cannot understand. But let us change the subject," she con-



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tinued, making a great effort to control herself. "We must now consider what steps can be taken for your journey to Zurich. Did the man who accompanied your father bring you the letter?"

"No," said Teresa. "He entrusted it to a poor man, whose blind mother, a Protestant, for several days sheltered Madonna Ponte and myself in her humble dwelling near the banks of the river opposite the Boschetto. The kindness shown to us by the mother, and the fidelity of her son in maintain-

ing our secret, and in assisting us in every way, are still fresh in my memory, and I much wish that I could do something to serve him."

"What is he?" asked Renée.

"He was formerly a soldier," said Teresa, "but he is now as poor as it is possible for a man to be. He has had a good education, for formerly they were in a very respectable position."

"His mother, you say, is a Protestant, I suppose the son is one also."

Teresa, with some embarrassment, said that he was not. She felt convinced that he was still a Protestant at heart, although he had nominally become a convert to the Church of Rome to save his mother.

"I can sympathize with him then," said the Duchess after a moment's silence. "Heaven knows I have no right to sit in judgment upon him. Where is he?"

"He is in the ante-room below, awaiting my return," said Teresa.

"I will see him myself. Bring him here."

Teresa left the room, and returned in a few minutes with Gerolamo, who, in spite of his poverty-stricken appearance, seemed by no means abashed in the presence of her Highness.

"This lady," said Renée to him, "tells me that you and your mother were kind to her and to another lady of my suite during the time they found it necessary to remain in concealment; tell me what I can do to serve you and your mother, and I will do it if it be in my power."

"Alas, your Highness! my mother died last week; and, relieved from her misery on earth, I am persuaded she is now an angel in heaven."

"Are you a Catholic and speak thus?" said Renée.

Gerolamo remained silent, although it was not difficult to perceive his anxiety to speak. Observing this, Renée said—

"Do not be afraid. What you say shall not be turned to your hurt, believe me."

"If I may speak the truth," said Gerolamo, "I was a Catholic while my poor mother lived, that I might save her from persecution. But now that she is gone it would take little to make me declare myself a Protestant."

Teresa was much surprised at hearing of the death of the blind widow. A moment's consideration, however, convinced her that the old woman's lot was rather to be envied than deplored.

"And what is your present occupation?" asked Renée.

"I have no occupation, your Highness, though I earnestly desire it. The few soldi I have earned in bringing this letter to Belriguardo I look upon as sent from God to me."

"You were formerly a soldier, were you not?" said Renée.

"I was," replied Gerolamo, "but now that there is no war, they can obtain younger and better men."

After a moment's silence Renée said—

"This young lady is likely to proceed to Zurich to join her father: would you like to be one of her escort?"

The habitual phlegm of Gerolamo gave way at this offer. Claspings his hands, he said—

"I can imagine no better fortune, your Highness. Willingly would I reside in Zurich, where I could openly declare myself to be what I really am in heart—a Protestant."

"Teresa, my child," said the Duchess, "take this man to the major-domo. Say that he is to be

accommodated in the Palace, that he is to be better clothed, and treated as one of the domestics."

Nothing more was said that day relative to Teresa's departure for Zurich. Early on the morrow, however, to her intense surprise, Renée entered the room before Teresa had risen from her bed. Seating herself by the bedside, Renée said to her—

"I dare say you are somewhat surprised at my visit, Teresa. I have come to talk with you about the preparations that are required for your journey. The sooner you leave this the better for your father's happiness and my peace of mind. Every hour you remain, my child, will increase the pain I shall feel at parting with you. Better one sharp pang than linger on for a time in pain. I did not close my eyes the whole of last night, so great was my sorrow. I have now resolved that you shall leave to join your father as soon as everything is ready for your journey."

"I trust your Highness will not forget me when I am gone," said Teresa imploringly.

"Forget you, my child!" said Renée, "never! My own daughters, much as I love them, are scarcely dearer to me than you are. But all things considered, it is better that we should part—better for you, better for your father, better for myself. Still we may be near in spirit, although the Alps divide us. Write to me by every opportunity, and I promise you that your letters shall not remain unanswered. But now let us speak of your journey. I expect his Highness from Ferrara to-day, and I have no doubt he will order that every protection be afforded to you while you are in his dominions. As you will doubtless pass through Mantua, I will ask him to give you a letter to his relative the Duke, who I am sure will secure you from annoyance while in his territory, as well as assist you to proceed further. I have selected for you two female companions on whom you may rely—my two Swiss servants, Carlotta and Susan. Being Protestants, they have received an order to quit the Duchy on the first opportunity, and one has now presented itself. They are natives of Lucerne; but I will supply you with money for their journey onwards from Zurich. And now for your male escort. Do you know any one on whom you can rely?"

Teresa, after a moment's consideration, suggested that she knew of no one better than Gerolamo.

"Let us fix on him then," said Renée. "He has already been a soldier, and you say he has received a good education. In courage and ability he will no doubt be quite equal to the task. I am sure his Highness will, at my request, grant him permission to wear the uniform of his guard; and that will not only assure him protection while in the Duchy, but after quitting it. And now, my child," continued Renée, "I will leave you. Do not speak yet of your departure to the Princesses. When they hear of it the news will cause them sorrow enough."

Then, kissing Teresa affectionately, the Duchess left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—CONCLUSION.

THE Duke, as Renée had anticipated, arrived in the course of the day from Ferrara. He made no objection either to Teresa's projected departure, or to Gerolamo's wearing the uniform of his guard. In all other respects he seemed indifferent to the subject. His mind was preoccupied with affairs in Ferrara, where, at the request of the Inquisitors, he had lately promulgated another *grida*, or edict, containing an elaborate scale of punishments for heretics, or, as they now termed them, blasphemers of the Virgin Mary and the saints. Renée had informed him that she wished no notice to be taken of Teresa's contemplated departure till all was in readiness. The Duke promised not to speak of it; and when he met Teresa in the afternoon, he behaved to her as if he had not heard that in a few days she would quit the Palace never to return.

About a week after the receipt of her father's letter everything was in readiness for Teresa's departure. Only the day before she was to leave were the Princesses informed of it. They were sorrowful indeed at the thought of losing their young friend. Sister Laura meekly suggested that it would be advisable for her to remain some time longer, so that she might be converted. But Madonna Bonifacio did not concur with the nun in this suggestion. Having been a parent herself, she could easily imagine the sorrow and anxiety which the Judge Biagio Rosetti, heretic as he was, would feel at being separated from his daughter.

In the afternoon Gerolamo presented himself to receive instructions for the journey from Teresa. At first sight she had some difficulty in recognising him, so much was he altered in appearance. Instead of the shabby civilian dress he had then worn, he was attired in the magnificent uniform, one side red, the other white, of the Duke's guard. With the uniform and sword, he seemed to have at the same time again adopted the bearing of a soldier. Instead of his usual slovenly appearance, he now stood erect, and the furtive expression of his eye had changed into a frank soldier-like gaze.

Teresa informed him that they were to proceed by the shortest route to Mantua, thence by Verona and Milan to Como, and then across the mountains to Switzerland. She added that a carretta would be prepared for her and the servants who were to accompany her, and that he would have a horse provided for him, while mules would follow with the baggage. Gerolamo promised that all would be ready at the appointed time, and Teresa passed a sorrowful evening with the Duchess and the Princesses.

Early next morning the arrangements for Teresa's departure were completed. The carretta came to the principal door of the Palace; Gerolamo, the two servants, and the multeers being already waiting below. The Duchess and the Princesses, with Madonna Bonifacio and Sister Laura, accompanied Teresa to the Palace door to bid her fare-

well. With the exception of the Jesuit, who had also joined them, there was not a dry eye there. The Duchess and her daughters embraced her tenderly; Madonna Bonifacio was scarcely less demonstrative; while even Sister Laura seemed to forget for the moment that the girl was a heretic, and kissed her affectionately as she bade her good-bye. The serious expression which had been on the face of Pelletario changed to a bland smile as with great courtesy he wished her a pleasant journey. The smile, however, vanished the moment after, and he resumed his former seriousness. He watched the young girl attentively as she entered the carretta, and as it drove off, for the first and only time he showed interest in the proceeding. Raising his hand, he made the sign of benediction, then turned away and sought his own apartment. It would be difficult to analyze with certainty the Jesuit's feeling. Was it that in spite of himself, or rather in spite of the principles of his order, he wished his blessing to follow the amiable heretic girl on her way to her father?

We will not accompany Teresa on the road to Zurich. The journey was accomplished without danger or inconvenience of any kind. A fortnight after Teresa had quitted Belriguardo, her father, who was now established as an advocate in Zurich, had once more the happiness of clasping his beloved daughter to his heart.

Notwithstanding the incapacity of Oriz to direct any longer the operations of the Holy Office, it prosecuted its labours with undiminished vigour. This work was greatly aided by the recantation of Renée, modified though it was. Not only in the Duchy of Ferrara, but throughout the whole of the north of Italy, she had hitherto been considered the champion and protectress of the Reformers. No longer encouraged by her patronage, they soon became disorganized and demoralized. They had no leader; their worship, whether public or private, was proclaimed penal, and those who were detected were punished with great severity. For some time they attempted to continue the practice of family worship, but in this they were soon discovered. In the houses of the wealthy, spies were frequently found among the members of the family itself. Generally these were amongst the younger members, whose faith had been tampered with. They were induced to believe that to bring under the notice of the Inquisitors the heretical opinions of the others was not only a duty acceptable to God, but a means of saving the souls of those who were dear to them.

It was no unusual thing for a member of a Protestant family who had joined the Church of Rome to receive permission to conceal his recantation for a time. This was given that he might join in family worship, and be able to give more certain information of the spread of the Reformed doctrines among his relatives and their friends.

With the poor and uneducated far less trouble was taken. There were several causes for this, the principal being that they were more easily detected on account of their not attending any place

of worship; while, as the ignorant were generally more bigoted than the educated, it was easier to obtain information respecting them. The Inquisitors rightly judged that, as the ignorant classes were greatly influenced by example, the populace would not long hold out if Protestantism could be extirpated among those who were wealthy and educated.

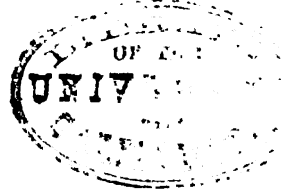
It is only just to admit that in one respect the Inquisition in Italy was carried on with less of cruelty than it was in Spain. In Italy the punishments were often fearfully severe. They were inflicted, however, rather as a warning to heretics of what they might suffer should they hesitate to join the Church of Rome than from vindictive feelings. Capital punishments were also less frequent, though the torture, floggings, and confiscations were carried out with great severity. One feature of the Inquisition in Ferrara deserves to be noticed. The severity of the punishment was regulated according to the education of the culprit and the position he

held in society. The most terrible punishments were those inflicted on persons who had relapsed into Protestantism after joining the Church of Rome. Their punishment was invariably the amputation of the tongue, accompanied by scourgings, the severity of which were in proportion to their education.

Rewards were also given to all who would bring heretical books to the Inquisitors. These were immediately burnt, and punishment of death was threatened to all who imported fresh copies into the Duchy. All parents were obliged, under penalty of their goods being confiscated, to send their children to Roman Catholic schools, so that the rising generation might be educated to abhor Protestantism.

Under such a system of oppression it would have been almost miraculous if Protestantism had held its ground. It gradually dwindled away, and when, at the death of the Duke's son, the Duchy reverted to the States of the Church, not a Protestant family remained in Ferrara.

10



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